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Letters to the Rev. Samuel Mil



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LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

SIR,

I have lately read your Ordination Sermon, which was preached some time since in Baltimore, and I propose offering for your consideration a few remarks on that part particularly, which relates to unitarians. You have taken special pains to make them hold a conspicuous place in that discourse; and although you do not multiply words, yet no one can complain, that what you have said is not sufficiently explicit and direct. Many have been at a loss to conjecture, what evil star could lead you so far out of the plain track of your duty, as to induce you to select that occasion for making so violent and unprovoked an attack on a class of christians, who had never shown any disposition to molest or injure you, or the society which you had the honour to address. And I confess myself to be among the number of those, who have not been able to reconcile your conduct with the character, which I was willing to believe you sustained, as a christian, a scholar, and a man.

I can easily conceive, that you might have no very high respect for the *opinions* of unitarians, because your own are so widely different. I can imagine, that you might regard these opinions as errors, and look

with concern on the spiritual condition of those, who were so unfortunate as to embrace them. I can suppose you might think it necessary, on suitable occasions, to point out such errors, to confute them by fair and temperate argument, and to make known their dangerous tendency. It is no difficult thing to imagine, that your love of truth, your sincerity, and your zeal in the cause of pure religion, might prompt you to so benevolent and pious a work. All this, done with moderation and a proper spirit, would not only be pardonable, but praiseworthy. It is every preacher's duty to support what he thinks to be truth, and by all just and honourable means to dig away what he conceives to be the sandy foundations of error.

But, Sir, when you take upon yourself the gratuitous and thankless service of coming thus publicly forward, not to detect and confute the dangerous opinions of a particular denomination of christians, not to win them from their errors by affectionate persuasion and salutary warnings, but harshly to brand them with the mark of heresy, to deny them the name of christians, and, what is worst of all, to charge them with immorality and irreligion in practice,—when you can so far desert the principles, which ought to actuate every christian teacher, and be the guide of every ingenuous mind, it would be a task more arduous and hopeless, than I should be willing to undertake, to find an apology for conduct so singular and obviously indefensible. From a certain class of preachers we look for pulpit denunciations, the fumes and phrensy of fanaticism, the storms of boisterous passion, and the misrepresentations of incorrigible ignorance. I say we look for them, because they have already been poured out upon us in no stinted measure, and we ought to expect, that the same troubled foun-

tains will continue to send forth the same turbid streams. And moreover, we have always found the most noise where there was the least argument, the broadest assertions connected with the weakest cause, and the greatest obstinacy proceeding from the greatest ignorance; and we presume it will always be so. But even these men, for the most part, content themselves with raising the cry of heresy, denouncing our sentiments, and barring against us the doors of divine mercy. Even they leave us in possession of our virtues, and seldom attempt to rob us of our good name. You have gone farther. It was not enough for you to fix the stain of heresy, and condemn us for deserting the true faith. You have struck at our reputation, and endeavoured to throw a slur upon our morals. You will neither allow us to have the name of christians, the praise of goodness, nor the credit of honest intentions. But before I proceed further, I will quote your own words. After entertaining your readers with the story of Paul of Samosata and Queen Zenobia, and assuring them, that "great cities have commonly been, in all ages, the hotbeds of error," you go on as follows.

"In great cities, likewise, or, at least, in states of society similar to what is commonly found in such places, has generally commenced that fatal decline from orthodoxy, which began, perhaps, with calling in question some of what are styled the more rigid peculiarities of received creeds, and ended in embracing the dreadful, soul-destroying errors of *Arius* or *Socinus*. We might easily illustrate and confirm this position, by examples drawn from our own country, had we time to trace the history of several sects among us, and especially of American Unitarianism. But I forbear to pursue the illustration farther; and shall only take the liberty to

ask, as I pass along—How it is to be accounted for, that the preaching of those who deny the Divinity and Atonement of the Saviour, and who reject the doctrines of Human Depravity, of Regeneration, and of Justification by the righteousness of Christ—How, I ask, is it to be accounted for, that such preachers, all over the world, are most acceptable to the gay, the fashionable, the worldly-minded, and even the licentious? That so many embrace and eulogize their system, without being, in the smallest perceptible degree, sanctified by it? That thousands are in love with it, and praise it; but that we look in vain for the monuments of its reforming and purifying power? I will not pretend to answer these questions; but leave them to the consciences of those who believe, that the genuine doctrines of the Gospel always have had, and always will have, a tendency to promote holiness of heart and of life; and that we must all speedily appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

To these singular remarks you add the following, in the form of a note.

“The above language, concerning the destructive nature of the *Arian* and *Socinian* heresies, has not been adopted lightly; but is the result of serious deliberation, and deep conviction. And in conformity with this view of the subject, the Author cannot forbear to notice and record a declaration made to himself, by the late *Dr. Priestley*, two or three years before the decease of that distinguished Unitarian. The conversation was a free and amicable one, on some of the fundamental doctrines of religion. In reply to a direct avowal on the part of the Author, that he was a *Trinitarian* and a *Calvinist*, *Dr. Priestley* said—‘I do not wonder that you Calvinists entertain and express a strongly unfavourable

vourable opinion of us Unitarians. The truth is, there neither can, nor ought to be, any compromise between us. If *you* are right, WE ARE NOT CHRISTIANS AT ALL; and if *we* are right, YOU ARE GROSS IDOLATERS.' These were, as nearly as can be recollected, the words, and, most accurately, the substance of his remark. And nothing, certainly, can be more just. Between those who believe in the Divinity and Atonement of the Son of God, and those who entirely reject both, *'there is a great gulph fixed,'* which precludes all ecclesiastical intercourse. The former may greatly respect and love the latter, on account of other qualities and attainments; but certainly cannot regard them as CHRISTIANS, in any correct sense of the word; or any more in the way of salvation, than *Mohammedans* or *Jews*."

Such is the language, which you found means to incorporate into an ordination sermon in Baltimore. The charges contained in these quotations I suppose you will allow to be of no ordinary kind. It is no trifling thing for any class of christians to be excluded from the pale of christianity, and openly charged with licentiousness and immorality. In the remarks I am about to make, I shall go upon the ground, which is too plain to be mistaken, that your charges were aimed exclusively at those persons, wherever they may be found, who call themselves unitarians. That they all do, or do not, hold to the opinions, which you choose to attribute to them, is a thing of no consequence as it respects my present purpose. Your assault is directed at the moral character of unitarian believers,—not as the speculative and probable result of the nature, or tendency of their opinions, but as it actually exists. It is the truth of your assertions on this point, which I intend to examine. I propose to make some short inquiries respecting the authority by

which you have ventured to declare, that among unitarians, you "look in vain for the monuments of the reforming and purifying power" of their religious tenets.

It is indeed most sincerely to be regretted, both as it concerns your own credit and the cause of truth, that you could not find "time to trace the history of American unitarianism," before you hazarded such a declaration. By such a process, you might possibly have made the public acquainted with facts, from which the integrity of your insinuations, and the veracity of your very bold assertions, would be more manifest. Or did you rely on the ignorance, as well as the good nature of your readers? In passing sentence of condemnation on a very large portion of the christians of this country, and in publishing against them the charge of immorality, did you feel yourself under no obligation to exhibit testimony? Although you confided in the implicit credence of a certain class of your readers, and pleased yourself with the idea, that you were writing for those, who were already prepared to listen to the hardest things you could say against unitarians, you certainly could not be so ignorant of mankind, as to suppose the persons, on whom you made so rude an attack, would suffer themselves to be thus calumniated, and to have their characters impeached, without exposing your unguarded asseverations, and demanding evidence of their truth. Although you denied them the privilege and the name of *christians*, you could not have forgotten that they are *men*, and as such can feel an injury, and perceive a violation of justice and the common laws of humanity, as quickly as other men of whom you might be disposed to speak in better terms.

Let me first ask you, for what purpose this anecdote about Dr. Priestley was introduced? What does it prove?

Nothing more, in truth, than that Dr. Miller, twenty years ago, had the honour of a "free and amicable conversation" with that great man, "on some of the fundamental doctrines of religion." This is the only *fact* connected with the anecdote; and however important this may be to Dr. Miller, it is not easy to discover in what way it concerns the public. I am willing to believe, upon the strength of your word, that Dr. Priestley said precisely what you have put into his mouth, and yet I cannot see the least connexion between these premises and your conclusion. Do you think it fair, or honourable, gravely to quote language, which has been used by any one in private and friendly conversation, and this from memory, after a lapse of twenty years,—do you think it fair or honourable to quote such language as a proof, that a large body of professed christians have no title to this name, and are "no more in the way of salvation, than Mohammedans or Jews?" And admitting you can reconcile this to your conscience, pray in what respect are the words of Dr. Priestley to your purpose, except upon the supposition, that you are certainly right, and he certainly wrong? If Trinitarianism be indeed the true doctrine, then we have the authority of Dr. Priestley, as reported by Dr. Miller, that unitarians "are not christians at all." And it is only upon this condition, that his authority in any degree sanctions your conclusions. Nay, let it be admitted, that Dr. Priestley actually believed unitarians to be no christians, or trinitarians to be idolaters, or any thing else, I would gladly know whether in your opinion, this would make it so? And above all, are the opinions of an individual to be made the ground work of a sentence of condemnation on a numerous class of christians, who may, or may not agree in adopting the views of this individual.

Since, then, this anecdote proves nothing, except the fact above mentioned, it is natural to inquire what motive could induce you to record it in a book? To me there is one obvious motive. Your sermon was intended for persons, who were very imperfectly acquainted with the opinions of unitarians. It was intended for those, who are opposed to them more from prejudice and the bias of early impressions, than from the convictions of deliberate inquiry, or a knowledge of the truth. On these persons, and especially on such as not only have not inquired, but are not disposed to inquire, and who are contented to take your conclusion without troubling themselves to examine your reasons, this anecdote, in the connexion in which you have contrived to introduce it, is well calculated to produce an effect unfavourable to unitarians. Whether the end sanctifies the means, let others judge. By making Dr. Priestley speak the language of this anecdote, and giving such a construction to his words, as you think suited to your purpose, you exhibit him in a character directly opposite to that in which he appeared during his whole life. No traits were more remarkable in his character, than his mild and amiable temper, his benevolent and christian spirit, and his desire to open the door of christian fellowship to all the believers in Jesus, and followers of his word. And yet, you have made use of his authority to justify you in the most illiberal censure, which one christian can pronounce on another, and in passing on the persons, whose opinions resemble his, a sentence of total exclusion not only from all ecclesiastical intercourse, but from the common privileges and hopes of christians. Few good men of any denomination of christians can envy you the character, which you have assumed here, of being a censor

and a judge; and least of all the task, which you have taken upon yourself, of passing a judgment so much at variance with the letter and spirit of the gospel of the Saviour, and even the common principles of charity.

In regard to the charge of licentiousness and immorality, which you have made against unitarians, you must not think me importunate in making a few direct and particular inquiries. I will ask you, in the first place, whether you have the testimony of your own experience? Have you lived in the society of unitarians, and do you judge from personal observations? Now, if I am rightly informed, this is not the case. You have never for a moment lived among them. You have had no means whatever of knowing the practical effects of their principles. And even with this, I will not say limited knowledge, but total absence of knowledge, you have dared publicly, and on the strength of your own authority, to impeach their morals. This, Sir, was a degree of presumption, which, however it might be looked for from other quarters, was not to be expected from a gentleman of your station and reputed worth. There has before been one instance among us, and only one it is believed, in which the moral character of unitarians has been attacked from the pulpit. But the result of this experiment was not such, it would seem, as to encourage any one in repeating it. The unwary speaker found it necessary afterwards publicly to confess his indiscretion, and retract his charges.

Although you have never witnessed the state of morals or religion in a society composed wholly of unitarians, yet you are undoubtedly acquainted with individuals of this belief, and some, perhaps, whom you have reason to call your friends. All the knowledge you possess from personal observation must be confined to

this acquaintance. And have you indeed found among these persons such marks of depravity and irreligion, that you feel warranted from their example in fixing a stigma, and passing the sentence of reprobation on a whole sect? Could any thing, but the most absolute knowledge of facts, be urged in justification of charges so flagrant? If it has been your misfortune to meet only with such characters among unitarians, and you judged from what you saw, it would have been but doing justice to the great body of those who profess their belief, to let the public know the source, as well as the extent of your information. As your charges stand at present, your readers are made to believe, that they are applicable "all over the world." And although you might think your conclusions deduced by good logic, others might not, and in a case of so much importance, it was your duty to make your antecedent propositions at least as clear as your deductions.

Let me inquire still further. Let me call your attention particularly to that portion of the country, where unitarian principles have been long prevalent, and where they are embraced by a very large part of the community. Are you prepared to charge the people of Boston, and its vicinity with a higher degree of immorality, and depravity of manners, than is found in other cities? Are you prepared to say, that the churches in that place, more than in any other, are filled with the "gay, the fashionable, the worldly-minded, and the licentious?" In Boston, if any where, may be found a proof of your assertions, because in that place the unitarians probably make the most numerous class of society. But dare you come before the public with any attempt to exhibit such proof? You dare not. You are too well informed on this subject to undertake such a

task. You dare not assail the moral characters of a great number of the leading and most respectable members of society. The Rev. Gardiner Spring, of New-York, it is true, has lately pronounced a libel against the clergy and people of Boston. Whether he was emboldened by your example, I cannot say. His rashness, however, has received its merited chastisement; and it is presumed he will hereafter think himself quite as well employed, in looking to the morals of his own party, as in calumniating the characters of others. And I venture to affirm, that you will never investigate the state of manners, the charitable and religious institutions, the morals and practical piety of unitarians, as a body, in any place, and have the courage to publish the result of your investigation, as a proof of the aspersions you have cast on them. This is an attempt in which you never will engage. Whoever will acquiesce in the truth or justice of your charges, must rely on your authority, and yours only. You neither will, nor can substantiate them by any credible evidence.

It is true, you have hinted at discoveries, which you might make, had you "time to trace the history of American Unitarianism." Let me tell you, that this was a very unfair insinuation. Your readers are left to imagine much evil to be concealed, which nothing but want of time prevents you from bringing to light. It is incumbent on you to disabuse them by tracing this history. Let it be done impartially, and then compared with the history of the presbyterian church, or of any other church, and no unitarian will shrink from the parallel. He will want no better illustration of the comparative moral influence of his principles, and no clearer refutation of your charges.

If there be any purifying power in religion, this ought to appear in its public teachers. Will you cast your eye through the ranks of those, who are commonly called the orthodox clergy, during the period of eight or ten years past? You may begin at Albany and go to Savannah. I need not mention names to bring to your recollection many facts of the most disgusting and disgraceful nature. They are too notorious to be soon forgotten. Debauchery, intemperance, forgery, are the dark and dreadful vices among others, which have been proved against several of the orthodox ministers within a few years,—and ministers, too, who have held the highest ranks in their respective churches, and shown the warmest zeal in defending what they represented to be the purifying doctrines of their faith, and in denouncing the dangerous heresies of other sects. But these, you will say, are individual examples, and ought not to be mentioned in disparagement of any class of christians. I allow it. I know they are individual examples, and therefore I will not introduce them to prove the depravity of other persons, any farther than such depravity appears. I call them to your recollection, because they seem to have escaped from your mind, while you were writing your sermon. You seem to have forgotten, that experience shows orthodox principles to have little power to secure the morals, much less the piety, even of those who have solemnly dedicated themselves to the ministry of divine truth. This reflection ought to have made you pause before you accused unitarians of immorality.

When you have taken this view of the orthodox side of the question, you may be still more enlightened by contrasting it with the history of American unitarianism, with which you profess to be familiar. I challenge you,

or any other man, to detect, in the annals of this history, a *single instance*, in which a unitarian clergyman has been publicly convicted of immorality, or even charged with vices injurious to his character. In the lives and in the affections of their people, you will find many evidences of their purifying example, and their ardour in the cause of gospel truth and practical religion; but you will look in vain for a memorial of those vices, which have disgraced and ruined many of their orthodox brethren. These are facts, which you will not pretend to deny; and the wonder is, that, with a full knowledge of them, an orthodox man should have the assurance to publish the asseverations contained in your discourse.

In regard to unitarians generally, I do not doubt there are some among them, whose lives and conduct are not so much influenced by religious principles, as every good man and pious christian could wish. But I would gladly be informed, if it is your opinion, that there are no such among the Presbyterians, and other denominations? Are all sects immaculate, in your estimation, but unitarians? Unless such be your opinion, upon what principles of justice have you singled these out, as worthy of your special denunciation? Unitarians are not in the habit of proclaiming their virtues, and their religious acts, from the housetop. *Pii orant taciti*. They consider religion a thing in which a man is intimately concerned with his Maker. Where it does not exist in the heart, speak to the conscience in the still small voice of heavenly truth, and exercise a controlling influence over the mind, the affections, and the will, they look upon pretensions, show, and clamour, as proving little else, than hypocrisy or delusion. Perhaps they do not make so much parade and noise about their religion

as some others; but even allowing this, it still remains to be proved, that they have less of the humble spirit of fervent piety, less of earnestness in their devotions and of ardour in their love and pursuit of truth, less indeed of any of those qualities, which our Saviour has declared to be requisite in his sincere and faithful followers. Now these are things, which I am well convinced you will never undertake to prove.

Your charges have an application more extensive than you may be at first aware. They extend to some of the greatest, the wisest, and best men, who have adorned the world. Your sweeping denunciation embraces all unitarians of every age and country. If your authority is to be relied on, Newton, Locke, and Chillingworth, were "no christians in any correct sense of the word, nor any more in the way of salvation, than Mohammedans or Jews." And even Lardner, whom all parties honour as the best of men, and unanimously quote as the most learned and able advocate of the christian cause, must come under the same censure. Those ornaments of the Episcopal Church, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Hoadley, Law, and Blackburne, must be ranked with those, among whom "we look in vain for the monuments of the reforming and purifying power" of their faith. The charge of immorality, of preaching to please and win the "licentious," and of "not being in the smallest degree sanctified" by their religion, must rest against such men as Emlyn, Whiston, Priestley, Lindsey, Price, Jebb, Wakefield, Chandler, Taylor, Benson, Cappe, Kippis, and a host of others among the English unitarians, against whose moral character the tongue of slander has never ventured to raise a whisper. Do not think it an impertinent question, if I ask you, whether you have ever attended to the biography of these men, and

studied their characters? Nor think me presumptuous in answering this question in the negative. I have too high an opinion of your probity and candour to believe, that with any adequate knowledge of this subject, you would have made the statements contained in your sermon. How do you excuse yourself, therefore, in the aspersions you have cast on their names, and the injustice you have done them, by asserting the immoral effects of those principles, which they believed the foundation of all true religion, and to the illustration and diffusion of which, many of them devoted their lives, at the expense of the greatest sacrifices? It is not much in accordance with the veracity of your statement, that the persons, whose names have just been mentioned, were remarkable for nothing more than their purity of manners and morals. I do not pretend there are no exceptions; but I am confident you cannot select an equal number of names of eminence from any sect, whose biographies and whose works bear such uniform and unequivocal testimony to their reverence for divine truth, their amiable and excellent virtues, their christian meekness, charity, benevolence, and fortitude, and a faithful discharge of their social and religious duties in every walk of life. Nothing can be more diametrically opposite to the entire spirit of your charges, than the facts, which may be collected by recurring to the lives and professions of distinguished unitarians. These facts you ought to have known and respected, before you engaged in the work of defaming them, blackening their moral character, and bringing an odium upon their faith. Do you believe Watts and Whitby became bad men, when they abandoned their trinitarian sentiments? Or have you any evidence, that they were not as virtuous, as pious, and as sincere practical christians, as

they had always previously been? It is possible, after all, that you accord in opinion with that paragon of meekness, candour, and charity, Bishop Horsley, who declared "the moral good of unitarians to be sin." If such be your opinion; if you really think it your duty to reprobate their virtues as vices, and to condemn in them what is worthy of the highest praise in others; then indeed your conduct towards them may admit of a plausible defence, but upon no other grounds.

These remarks have run to a greater length, than was intended. If they indicate warmth and feeling, you must remember the provocation. Your attack was rude, and wanton, and unprovoked. It was made without any justifiable grounds, and in defiance of truth. It goes, as far as your authority can make it go, to inflict a deep injury on a class of Christians to which I belong. His selfrespect must be very feeble, his sense of propriety very dull, and his religious feelings very obtuse, who could be indifferent to such a slander. And more especially, a unitarian of Baltimore, where your charges were intended to produce their strongest effect, would be justly censurable for want of interest in his religious faith, if he could look with complacency on the singular aberrations into which you deviated to assert not only the evil tendency, but the immoral *effects* of his belief.

And after all, what good did you expect to accomplish, by taking that occasion to anathematize unitarians? I am not aware, that any one among them had lifted his voice against you, or any of your friends in this city. Did you think it befitting in a minister of peace, and of the gospel of the Saviour, thus to apply the torch and kindle the flame? Could you do nothing for harmony, and christian love, and mutual kindness?

Had you no argument to convince unitarians of their errors, no persuasions to turn them from their sins? Had you no word of counsel and advice to diminish, rather than strengthen the prejudices of their enemies; to allay, rather than inflame the passions? Were the sympathies of your nature blotted out, and the common feelings of benevolence frozen in your soul? Had you no compassion, no kind wishes for the beings, whom you represent to be diving into the depths of depravity by system, and seeking their ruin upon principle? While hurrying down this dreadful precipice, did you think it the part of a christian to add what force you could to increase their velocity, and hasten their destruction? Could you not make a single effort to rescue and save? Such, it seems to me, would have been the conduct of a christian minister, who felt that interest for the eternal welfare of his fellow men, which every christian minister ought to feel.

I respect your character, talents, learning, virtues, as highly as any other person; but I do not respect these enough to allow you to judge and condemn my moral and religious character, and that of my brethren, without demanding of you some reason for such condemnation. That you had been misinformed and deceived is no justification. This will not heal the breach you have made, nor prevent the ill effects of your sentence. It was a case in which no man ought to have felt at liberty to act, without the most positive knowledge of facts. Your sentence of condemnation concerns us, not merely as christians, but as men, as members of society. You represent us as immoral from the influence of our religious principles; and if this be true, we ought to be shunned by all good persons, as dangerous to the peace and order of the community. You would raise against

us the inquisition of public opinion, and not only subject us to the prejudices of party zeal, and the caprices of ignorant credulity, but you would banish us from the privileges of society, the affections of friends, the charity and respect of the virtuous and the well informed. Sir, the course you have pursued needs explanation; you have assumed a right, which it is your duty to make good. You owe it to yourself; you owe it to those, who have been deceived by your representations; you owe it to the cause of truth, and of good faith; and above all, you owe it to those, whom you have traduced and injured, whether intentionally or not, to come forward with some testimony in your support, some proof of your assertions, some reasons for your violent attack on their morals, and their religious character. This is what they have a right to expect and demand.

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

Among other English unitarians, not mentioned above, whose talents and learning have never been disputed, and whose moral character will bear any scrutiny, which the eagle-eyed malice of their enemies can make, may be numbered the following; namely, Bishop Clayton, Abernethy, Leland, Lowman, William Penn, Palmer, Tyrrwhit, Disney, Kenrick, Simpson, Toulmin, Reynolds, Estlin, Dr. Enfield, Bretland, Turner. To these may be added from among the earlier English unitarians, Elwall, Biddle, Firmin, and Hopton Haines, the friend and associate of Newton. The rare virtues of Biddle and Firmin have been celebrated by all parties. Bishop Burnet bears the highest testimony to the excellence of the latter. *History of his own Times*, vol. III. p. 292. And even John Pye Smith, to whom the virtues of other unitarians seem not to be virtues, calls Firmin a "mirror of charity."—*Letters to Belsham*, p. 88.

Another writer has called Firmin "a man of extraordinary affections and abilities, for the great works of charity and piety." And the following are the words of the bishop of Gloucester, who was with him when he died. "He told me he was now going; and I trust, said he, God will not condemn me to worse company, than I have loved and

used,' in the present life. I replied, that he had been an extraordinary example of charity; the poor had a wonderful blessing in you; I doubt not these works will follow you, if you have no expectation from the merit of them, but rely on the infinite goodness of God, and the merits of our Saviour. Here he answered, I do so; and I say in the words of my Saviour, "*When I have done all, I am but an unprofitable servant.*"

Biddle was among the earliest of the English Unitarians. He suffered persecution, imprisonment, and many temporal calamities on account of his religious sentiments. No man has been more celebrated for his humanity, benevolence, and piety. His biographers tell us, that "he had such a lively sense of the obligations of humanity and kindness, that it was one of his first lessons, not only to relieve, but to visit the sick and poor, as the best means of administering comfort to them, and of gaining an exact knowledge of their circumstances; and as affording an opportunity to assist them by our counsel, or our interest, more effectually than we do or can bestow upon them." And again; "He was a strict observer himself, and a severe exacter in others, of reverence in speaking of God, and Christ, and holy things; so that he would by no means hear their names, or any sentence of ~~his~~ scripture, used vainly or lightly,—and even in his common converse, he always retained an awe of the divine presence." See a *Short Account of his Life*,—and also *Toulmin's Review of his life*, p. 130, 131.

The following testimony to the excellent character of Dr. Priestley, is from the pen of the celebrated Dr. Samuel Parr, who knew him well. It is contained in his letter from Irenopolis to the inhabitants of Eleuthropolis. "I confess with sorrow, that in too many instances, such modes of defence have been used against this formidable Heresiarch, as would hardly be justifiable in the support of revelation itself, against the arrogance of a Bolingbroke, the buffoonery of a Mandeville, and the levity of a Voltaire. But the cause of orthodoxy requires not such aids. The church of England approves them not. The spirit of christianity warrants them not. Let Dr. Priestley be confuted where he is mistaken. Let him be exposed where he is superficial. Let him be rebuked where he is censorious. Let him be repressed where he is dogmatical. But let not his attainments be depreciated, because they are numerous almost without a parallel. Let not his talents be ridiculed, because they are superlatively great. Let not his morals be vilified, because they are correct without austerity, and exemplary without ostentation; because they present

even to common observers the innocence of a hermit, and the simplicity of a patriarch; and because a philosophic eye will at once discover in them the deep fixed root of virtuous principle, and the solid trunk of virtuous habit."—*See Appendix to Magee on the Atonement*, p. 477.

Even Dr. Horsley was forced to confess his respect for the talents and worth of his great antagonist. After expressing the little regard he had for Dr. Priestley's "argument on a particular subject," he goes on to add; "This hinders not, but that I may entertain the respect, which I profess for your learning in other subjects; for your abilities in all subjects in which you are learned; and a cordial esteem and affection for the virtues of your character, which I believe to be great and amiable." *Horsley's Letters to Priestley*, p. 276. *Let. XVII.*

The following remarks on the character of Lindsey are from a trinitarian, the Rev. Job Orton, who has been called the "last of the Puritans." They are contained in his *Letters to Dissenting Ministers*.

"I am exceedingly glad," says he, "to hear, that Mr. Lindsey's chapel was so well filled, especially in the summer season, when the London congregations are generally thin. I have had two or three letters from that worthy and excellent man, whom I much esteem, and hold in the same veneration as I should have done one of the ejected and silenced Ministers a century ago. I have nothing to do with his particular sentiments; but his good sense, learning, piety, integrity, and desire to do good, demand the esteem and affection of every consistent Christian, especially every consistent Dissenter.

"Were I to publish an account of ejected and silenced Ministers, I should be strongly tempted to insert Mr. Lindsey in the list, which he mentions with so much veneration. He certainly deserves as much respect and honour as any one of them, for the part he has acted. Perhaps few of them exceeded him in learning or Piety. I venerate him as I would any of your confessors. As to his particular sentiments, they are nothing to me, any more than Baxter's, or Tombes's, or John Goodwin's. An honest, pious man, who makes such a sacrifice to truth and conscience, as he has done, is a glorious character, and deserves the respect, esteem, and veneration of every true christian, whatever his particular sentiments may be."—*See Monthly Repository*, Vol. I. p. 304.

Emlyn was remarkable for his piety and virtues. After a minute account of the interesting events of his life, of his patience and fortitude during his imprisonment and sufferings for his faith, his biographer adds; "Thus lived, thus died this excellent, holy, good man,

this eminently faithful servant of God; and in him the world has lost one of the brightest examples of substantial, unaffected piety; of serious, rational devotion; of a steady, unshaken, integrity; and an undaunted christian courage." *Life of Thomas Emlyn*, p. 98. London, 1746.

Archbishop Tillotson speaks of the "incomparable Chillingworth," and calls him "the glory of his age and nation." *Sixth sermon on the Efficacy of Faith*.

The amiable and christian virtues of Dr. Enfield are well known. Dr. Aiken, who was intimately acquainted with him, has said, that "religion was to him rather a *principle*, than a sentiment, and he was more solicitous to deduce from it a *rule of life*, enforced by its peculiar sanctions, than to elevate it into a source of feeling. His writings breathe the very spirit of his gentle and generous soul. He loved mankind, and wished nothing so much as to render them the worthy objects of love." *Aiken's Life of Enfield, prefixed to his Sermons*, p. 14, 27.

The character of Dr. Jebb, as delineated by Dr. Disney and others, shows him to have been a man of the noblest virtues, of warm piety, and the purest benevolence. Mr. Capel Lofft has described in glowing terms his "amiable, elevated, and exemplary character." "He died," says another writer, "a martyr to his zeal and activity in promoting knowledge, piety and virtue." See *Memoirs of Jebb*, p. 233.

Of Dr. Disney, his biographer writes, that, "In every thing he did, he acted under the influence of religion, and as in the continual presence of God. Piety was the leading feature in his character; and his desire to promote it in others, the first object of his mind and thoughts. The amendment of the morals of every person, the wealthiest and the poorest, with whom he had any intercourse, occupied his chief attention. All his undertakings had this end in view." *Memoir prefixed to his Discourses*, p. 23, 24.

The following is the character of Dr. Kenrick of Exeter, who was distinguished for his love of religious truth, and his profound attainments in theology.—"In a moral and religious view he attained to great eminence. Firm, upright, independent, he was, at the same time, kind and tender in his feelings, candid in his judgments, cordial and steadfast in his friendships, and generous and beneficent in his various intercourses with the world. The purity of his mind, his disinterestedness and self denial, and the zeal, which he constantly exercised for the accomplishment of important objects, were the genuine fruits of christian piety and faith. His devotion was a principle and

habit; and his consistency of conduct procured him general respect; while, united with the valuable qualities already enumerated, it cemented and increased the attachment of those, who had the happiness of knowing him in private life." *Memoir. p. 27.*

The above quotations have been made at random from such materials as are at hand. They are enough to show, that we have not spoken unguardedly. The characters of many persons, whom we have mentioned, are too well known to need any formal testimony in their favour; and we have no fear, that any of them will suffer by the strictest search, which may be made into their lives, their religious profession and practice, and their regard to the duties of virtue and piety.

THE END.

THE
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CONDITIONS.

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SECOND AND THIRD

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT
IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, AT PRINCETON,

ON HIS

CHARGES AGAINST UNITARIANS.

[From the Unitarian Miscellany.]

Baltimore:

JOHN D. TOY, PRINTER,
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1821.

SECOND LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.



SIR,

I have perused your Reply to a letter, lately addressed to you, respecting certain charges against unitarians contained in your Ordination Sermon. This reply is of a nature, which requires a continuation of my remarks. I agree entirely with you, that the cause of truth and righteousness will not suffer, but rather be promoted, by fair investigation, and temperate discussion. Without these, few truths, which are of any value, can be rationally and permanently established. It is only the flimsy texture of error, which will crumble and decay at the touch. It is only the counterfeit coin, which will be tarnished by the purifying test. And so with opinions. What is false may be detected and exposed by inquiry and argument. Truth will stand more firm, assume a statelier majesty, and shine with a brighter lustre.

For these reasons, I do not regret, that you have imposed on me the necessity of speaking more at large, on the subject of my last letter. I should consider myself guilty of a culpable indifference and neglect of duty, not to defend, when occasion requires, such opin-

ions, and especially religious opinions, as I have adopted from a conviction of their truth. And if, in addition to this, I should not be prompt to repel unprovoked and unwarrantable attacks on my moral character, I should feel, that I had as little respect for myself, as love of virtue, and regard for religion.

You express, with considerable emphasis, your determination not "to take the least notice of any future communication from the Unitarian of Baltimore." This will not be solicited. I do not write to gain your notice, but to correct your mistakes. You must not be surprised, however, if you are called on quite as loudly to explain some positions taken in your Reply, as you were to vindicate the offensive parts of your Sermon. But, you say, you are under no "obligation to comply with a call of this kind." This is very true; nor will any such obligation be imposed. I shall take the liberty of making my opinions freely known to the public, without caring to have you trouble yourself about them any further, than you think them worthy of your notice.

You complain with some warmth of the kind of language used in my letter. You think it harsh, and disrespectful. Of this I am not aware. It may possibly be true, as applied to your general character. But it was not thus applied. It was used with exclusive reference to your Sermon. The writer was not obliged to know any thing more of your character, while commenting on that discourse, than he found there displayed. And if he did know more, it was not his duty to suffer this knowledge to betray him into a language, which would not express his opinions, to the exclusion of that, which he was conscious the nature of the subject imperiously demanded.

If your "feelings and habits allow you to employ such language," as you have employed in that discourse, when speaking of a respectable denomination of christians, your delicacy must indeed be of a very inexplicable kind, to be offended with the language, which you mark as objectionable. Or, do you conceive there is nothing offensive in charging men, who feel that they are as sincere, as conscientious, as virtuous, and as pious as yourself, with having embraced "dreadful and soul-destroying errors," and "destructive heresies;" and in affirming, that they "cannot be regarded as *christians* in any correct sense of the word, or as any more in the way of salvation, than Mohammedans, or Jews;" that their "preachers all over the world are most acceptable to the gay, the fashionable, the worldly minded, and even the licentious;" that "they are not in the smallest perceptible degree sanctified by their system;" and that among them, you "look in vain for the monuments of its reforming, and purifying power?" Is this language such, as you think consistent with the "intercourse of gentlemen, to say nothing of the christian temper?" Now, all persons, it is presumed, who look at this subject impartially, and make it a case of their own, will acknowledge, that there has seldom been any thing more outrageous, unceremonious, or unchristian. This was the language replied to in my letter; and as thus applied, it is not believed a single epithet, term, or phrase is too strong. And in truth, that must be a very fruitful vocabulary, which shall contain many words sufficiently expressive to communicate the feelings of any conscientious person, against whom your charges are professedly made.

An attack, which involved the opinions, motives, conduct, and characters of those against whom it was

directed; which aimed a destroying blow at every thing most valuable in life and most consoling in prospect,—such an attack, you could not suppose would be gently repelled. His sensibility is not to be envied, who could feel no shock from such an assault. Every man is bound to defend his reputation. On this depends the dignity of his character, and his usefulness in life. When this is gone, nothing worth having remains. Had your attack extended to unitarians only as members of civil society, they would have no ordinary grounds of complaint. As it is, the case is still more aggravating. You come down particularly upon their religious character. You accuse them of immorality, in consequence of spiritual blindness, and religious errors. The principles of their faith, you represent to be peculiarly grateful to the loose and irreligious. They have no reforming power. Their efficacy is not seen in the lives of those, who embrace them.

We should truly not deserve the privileges of christians, if we could recognize ourselves in the picture you have drawn. If our apathy were so great, as not to be excited by the exhibition you have made of us, we might well suspect the truth, power, and value of our religion. But even you allow us to be *sincere*. Would you allow it any longer, if we could acquiesce in the justice of your charges? Can we be sincere in adopting principles of moral action, and of piety, and in offering a service to our Maker, which we know are offensive in his sight? Can we be sincere in abetting a religion, which we are sure is working our ruin? This is not possible. If we are sincere in any thing, it must be in cherishing what we believe to be the principles of a pure and holy religion, the truth as it is in Jesus, and in holding to a faith, which we conceive will be the

surest means of fixing the stamp of virtue and holiness on our characters, and of preparing us for realizing the hopes of a glorious immortality. To suppose a believer in Jesus sincere in pursuing the course, which you have attributed to us, is absurd; and if we are sincere in what we feel to be the true faith, and the great duties and obligations of the christian religion, we must think,—every principle of our nature compels us to think,—that the mode in which you have attacked us is singularly unjust and indefensible, without any adequate apology in the nature of the case, or in the object to be attained.

In your Reply, you have nearly, if not quite, deserted the ground, on which you first placed yourself. The subject, as you brought it forward, related chiefly to the moral character of unitarians; and your remarks *on this point only* were all, which you were desired to explain and substantiate. This was more than once expressly stated. You were called on to give “some reasons for your violent attack on the morals, and religious character” of unitarians. This request you have not met in any shape. It is true, you have made some curious remarks on the evil tendency of unitarian principles, and on what you have “heard” to be the mode of preaching among them; but these are in no way connected with the original subject.

It was not the tendency of principles, but existing facts, with which you were concerned. It was desired, that you would point to some example; describe the state of morals among unitarians, where they are united in separate bodies; examine their institutions; refer to some authentic historical record; the general sentiment of mankind; or, indeed, to bring forward any sort of testimony, which should justify you in preferring

charges of so serious a nature against a whole denomination of christians. This you have not done, nor even attempted. Had you spoken only of the *tendency of principles*, we should have had no occasion to make such a call upon you. This is a thing to be settled by examination of principles, and by argument, and on which various opinions may exist, without impeaching any one's character. But when you speak of *actual effects*, you must bring proof. When you say we are immoral, you assert a fact. We demand evidence. Immorality consists in visible acts, which may be cited. You have cited none. You have referred to no class of unitarians, who are more wicked, as a class, than their brethren of other denominations. This should be done, to make your positions just. You have singled them out, as prominent on the list of evil-doers. Make it appear, and they will be satisfied. Until you do, they will continue to think, that you have made assertions, which cannot be proved, accused them wrongfully, and injured them without a cause.

This subject will be taken up more at large, when we come to that part of your Reply, which has a more direct bearing on the main point at issue. Had you confined yourself to this, it would be unnecessary to go into other topics. But you have chosen to range in a wider field. To do justice to the subject, as introduced in your Reply, it becomes necessary to consider several distinct particulars, which might otherwise have been kept out of the controversy. You have laboured to show *the suitableness of the occasion, which you embraced to deliver the sentiments contained in your Sermon;—to prove unitarians not to be christians;—to explain your views respecting their morals;—and to give a demonstration from Scripture, that they have*

very incorrect notions of christian charity. To these several topics we shall come in their order.

In regard to the first, it is a matter of so little consequence, that it needs not detain us long. If you think it your duty to use such language at all, it can hardly be supposed you will be convinced, that it is any where out of place. It does appear to me, however, that the shades of Paul of Samosata might have been permitted to rest in peace, without being called up at this late day, in a popular assembly in Baltimore, to increase the terrors of unitarianism, and to cast additional odium on those, who embrace this faith. The anecdote about Dr. Priestley, with all your efforts, you have not defended to my satisfaction. I am yet to be taught with what propriety it was introduced, especially in such a connexion, and for such a purpose. But of these things let others judge.

There are several important reasons, why your remarks were peculiarly misplaced. What good effect were they likely to produce? Can you conceive of any? The religion of the Saviour is a religion of peace, brotherly love, good-will, kindness, affection. These virtues he has commanded all men to practise, and made it the great characteristic of his true followers, that they love one another. But do you believe the passage in your Sermon about unitarians could have this effect? Was it likely that your hearers would be more ready to love those, of whom you drew so revolting a picture, and whom you denounced with so much earnestness? And could you believe, that the persons themselves, whom you portray in such colours, would have their tempers improved, their good feelings called forth, their passions subdued, and the holy charities of their nature strengthened and multiplied, by listening to the lan-

guage in which you have described them? When all the rules of moral perception, and all the laws of virtue, and all the principles of human nature are inverted, you may expect such a result, and not before. What you have said might move your hearers to shun, reproach, and hate unitarians, but it could never excite an emotion of christian love. I repeat the question, then, was an ordination sermon the place for kindling up the flame of sectarian animosities, and infusing into the minds of the persons present a spirit of suspicion, prejudice, and aversion against the members of another society, many of whom were their neighbours and friends?

Had you undertaken to state and confute the *erroneous opinions* of unitarians, the case would be less decided. But you undertook no such thing. You have said not a word to explain what you meant by the errors of unitarians, nor to show in what respect these errors are so dangerous, as you infer. You simply declare your abhorrence of their sentiments, in such terms, as to alarm your hearers, without attempting to enlighten their minds, or convince their understanding. You could not be ignorant, that very few of the persons, to whom you were speaking, had any accurate knowledge of the principles of the unitarian faith. Nor could you be ignorant, that their prepossessions and prejudices were pointedly at war with it; not so much from inquiry and conviction, as from ignorance. I do not mention this to the reproach, or disrespect of any person, but only as a fact; and one, which may undoubtedly be accounted for, without reflecting upon any one's motives or intentions. But since such was the fact, it was certainly no very striking token of ingenuousness, candour, or a christian spirit, to take advantage of this

prejudice,—such an advantage, as would operate to the disparagement and injury of any portion of the christian community.

Nor does it appear, as an apology for the part you acted, that the society, whom you addressed, have suffered, or are likely to suffer, by any special encroachments of the “heresy” of unitarianism. The unitarians of this city have never interfered with their concerns. Nor has any complaint been heard, that unitarians as a body, or individually, have made any efforts to convert the members of this society to their faith. They would be glad to have all men adopt their principles, because they think them the true principles of the gospel, and more effectual than any others in promoting a sincere repentance and obedience, and in securing the present happiness and final salvation of men. But no improper, or undue, or extraordinary means have been employed to convince the members of the society in question. Why then should you think it necessary to take the occasion you did, to warn them of dangers, which have never threatened; to awaken apprehensions, which are not likely to be realized; and to stir up their aversions without a just cause.

There is another thing, also, which must have some weight with every fair mind. The unitarians of this city have lately associated themselves into a regularly organized body, for the purpose of worshipping God in such a way, as their consciences dictate, their understandings direct, and as they think the scriptures teach. In doing this, they have conformed to the laws of their country, as well as to the laws of their religion. They ask no favours, they claim no privileges, which others do not enjoy. They set up no pretensions, which they do not cheerfully allow to others. They ask nothing

more, than to be left in the quiet possession of the Bible, to be unmolested in searching the truths it contains, in conforming to the instructions of the Saviour, and in seeking the salvation of their souls, by obeying his laws, and striving to render an acceptable service to their Maker. Notwithstanding this, it is well known, that public sentiment has been unreasonably excited against them. Their enemies have been busy to misrepresent, the credulous have been ready to believe, the timid to shudder with alarms, the ignorant to denounce, and all have been inclined to look on unitarians with an eye of distrust and aversion.

Under such circumstances, is it not natural for them to regard your attack, as an ill timed intrusion? Your remarks were obviously intended to injure them in the estimation of their neighbours. Could this be done in the spirit of love? Was it to be expected from a man, who values religious freedom, and regards the rights of conscience? You were a stranger in the city; and it is not easy to find a reason, why you should think an ordination sermon, which you had been invited to preach, should afford a suitable opportunity for dragging forward any particular body of christians here, of whom you could have no personal knowledge, and for holding them up as worthy of public censure, dangerous to society, unsound in their religious faith, and immoral in their conduct. You talk of duty. This is enough, perhaps, so far as your own conscience is concerned. But this does not alter the nature of the deed itself. It does not weaken the injurious tendency, nor remove the ill effects of your charges.

The question, you tell us, "must be left for decision before a higher tribunal." All questions will, most certainly, one day be decided by the great Searcher of all

hearts, and Judge of men. But how is this important fact concerned in the present instance? The question between us is to be decided here, else why are we writing about it? Not the question, whether you were conscientious in what you have done; but whether you did not act unadvisedly, without sufficient knowledge and caution; whether your representations are correct, and whether you have not aided in fixing false impressions in the minds of many, and in keeping alive a narrow and unjust prejudice against unitarians. These questions are not to be settled by an appeal to a higher tribunal, but by a clear statement of facts, and a just course of reasoning. By such an appeal as you make, the greatest enormities, which have been committed in the christian world, have been defended.

But you say. "allow me to ask, are unitarians in the habit of being very scrupulous about bringing forward their peculiar opinions, on public and special occasions, and even in preaching ordination sermons?" This question, it is presumed, every unitarian will joyfully answer in the negative. The time will never come, it is hoped, when unitarians will be "scrupulous about bringing forward their peculiar opinions" in any place. And what does this prove? Nothing, certainly, in your favour. No one has complained, that you should enforce your *peculiar opinions* in such a place and manner as you choose. That you made charges against the *character* of others is the complaint, and not that you attacked their opinions, or published your own. On what occasion has a unitarian preacher done this? Never. Look over their printed discourses, consult as many persons, as you will, who have heard such as have not been printed, and then show me a single example in which the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catho-

lics, or any other sect, have been selected and denounced, as peculiarly immoral from the nature of their religious faith, or from any other cause,—show me but one example, and I will give up the argument.

You can find none. But suppose you could; suppose it were true, that Presbyterians, or any other body of Christians, have been accused of immorality by unitarian preachers; it affords no justification to any one, who follows their steps. We are not to return railing for railing. In the first place, then, there is no precedent among unitarians for your discourse; and in the second place, if there were, it would afford no argument to your purpose.

Before closing this letter, I have only to remark, in few words, on two or three passages in your preface. In one place you express yourself as follows. “When the orthodox use this title, (unitarian) they consider it as only designating those, who reject all belief in that mysterious, *threefold mode of existence* in the one Supreme and Eternal Jehovah, which the scriptures, as we think, *plainly teach*,—and of which the rejection *always has been*, and *always must be*, connected with a *denial of every essential principle of the Gospel*.” It is not easy to say precisely what you mean, by this “threefold mode of existence.” It is the language of Sabellians. The notion of a trinity is gone. A trinity of *modes* is no trinity at all. No unitarian would object to this fancy, nor suppose it in any way affects the unity of God. That the Deity has various *modes of existence*, no one, probably, will think of denying. If you believe only in a *modal* trinity, you are too much in the faith of unitarians on this point, to be at any more pains to show a difference.

And again, if you do not mean what your language expresses, but still hold to the old fashioned Athanasian and Calvinistic trinity of persons; is it true, that such a trinity is "clearly taught" in the scriptures? Has it not always been defended as a doctrine of *inference*? Where is it said in the Bible, that God exists in three distinct persons? Bishop Smalridge is very explicit on this subject. "It must be owned," says he, "that the doctrine of the trinity, as it is proposed in our articles, our liturgy, our creeds, is *not in so many words taught us in the holy scriptures. What we profess in our prayers we no where read in scripture*, that the one God, the one Lord, is not the only person, but three persons in one substance. But although these truths are not read in scripture, yet they may easily, regularly, and undeniably be *inferred* from scripture." The trinity, then, as usually received, is not supported by any direct authority in the scriptures; and I submit to you, whether such a doctrine can be said to be *clearly taught*.

The last clause of the above paragraph is still more extraordinary. It tells us, that a rejection of the trinity is "connected with a denial of every essential principle of the gospel." Are not the doctrines of the divine attributes, a superintending providence, the moral agency of man, repentance, pardon of the penitent, a resurrection, a future state of retribution, and salvation by the free grace of God,—are not these *essential principles* of the gospel? And what have these to do with a trinity? Or in what respect will denying the one, have any influence on our opinion of the others?

Near the close of your preface, you speak of the "*atoning sacrifice and purifying spirit of JEHOVAH*"

manifest in the flesh." Are we to understand here that the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth suffered death to make a sacrifice to himself for the sins of his creatures? If this be not your meaning, the words employed do not perform the office for which they were designed. Can you think, without horror, of a doctrine which teaches the death of the Supreme Being? This was too shocking for Athanasius himself. "Our scriptures," says he, "no where mention the blood of God, such daring expressions belong only to Arians." Does the popular doctrine of the atonement, as adopted by the Presbyterian church, require us to believe, that He, with whom alone is immortality, actually died? It would seem so from your language. Upon such a doctrine no comment is required. It needs only be stated to have its proper weight on every one, who has any just views of his Maker, or reverence of his character.

There is another objection against this passage. The part from scripture is not quoted rightly. The word *Jehovah* cannot be used there. It helps to strengthen your doctrine, but it violates every rule of criticism. Between the meaning of the words *Jehovah* and *God* is an essential difference. The former always denotes the Supreme Being, and the latter is often applied to designate other beings. With no propriety, therefore, or fidelity to the original, can they be substituted one for the other. Nor is Jesus Christ ever called *Jehovah*. Besides, you very well know, that the word itself in the original, which you render *Jehovah*, is of doubtful authority, in the estimation even of learned trinitarian critics. Sir Isaac Newton, who should be high authority with you, as you alone, probably, among all men living, believe him to have been a trinitarian, has written a very learned criticism to show, that this word

was not used by the Apostles, and ought not to be admitted into the original text. Many others have retraced and continued his investigations, and come to the same result. These things considered, is it fair to quote this text, as of equal authority with the undisputed parts of scripture? And, especially, is it allowable to force such a meaning on any word, or passage, doubtful or not, as no construction of the original will justify?

I have now done with the first part of your Reply. In my next letter will be examined the grounds, on which you deny to unitarians the name of Christians, and rank them among Mohammedans and Jews.

Yours,

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

THIRD LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

SIR,

In the present letter I am to inquire into the grounds, on which you deny to unitarians the *name of Christians*. At first view, this subject does not seem to be of much importance. Names do not alter things, and whatever you may choose to call us, we shall still be the same. But many things derive their importance as much from their consequences, as their nature. Although names are nothing in themselves, yet when they misrepresent our motives, sentiments, and characters, they are not so trifling, or unworthy of consideration, as might at first be imagined.

Our reputation in the world depends on the opinion of others. If this opinion be perverted, or illfounded, it will not alter our characters, but it will weaken our influence, destroy our usefulness, and thus diminish our happiness. Now this result is to us a real injury, and the more to be deprecated, as coming from so unjustifiable a source, as false opinion. And besides, although *we* are not made worse, others are, because they are prompted to indulge thoughts, give currency to reports, and be guilty of conduct, which add nothing to their own virtues, nor to the good order of society.

It is obvious, then, that there is some virtue in names, and that it is the duty of every man, who values his reputation and his rights, to assert his claims to such titles, as shall truly represent his character.

No name is more honourable, none is more endearing to every sincere follower of Christ, none is cherished by them with more sacredness, than the name of *Christian*. It is a bond of union and love, which unites the hearts of those, who are enlightened by the same truths, engaged in the same duties, encouraged by the same promises, and pressing forward with the same hopes. This bond you have attempted to sever. A large portion of the followers of Jesus, who humbly and earnestly study his gospel, who rely implicitly on his word, who desire to bring themselves wholly in subjection to his laws, who consider him to have been commissioned from heaven to make known the will of God and the terms of salvation to men, and whose choicest consolations are derived from their faith in the divinity of his character, and the truth of his doctrines,—a large portion of these, you would exclude from the privilege of uniting under his name, and deprive them of the consolations, blessings, and enjoyments, which such a union is calculated to ensure. Few christians, who feel the power of the religion they profess, and are sensible of their own imperfections and proneness to error, would be willing to pronounce such a sentence of exclusion. Few would presume to institute such a tribunal upon the consciences and hearts of their fellow men, and place themselves in the judgment seat of Him, before whom all “must stand or fall,” and who alone has power to judge. It is indeed to be lamented, that any should be deluded into so much boldness and imprudence, in direct violation of

the religion itself, which they profess to receive, honour, and vindicate.

It is not my purpose here to inquire into the origin of the name *Christian*. It was first applied to the disciples of Christ at Antioch; but whether it was originally adopted by themselves, or given by others, we are not told; nor is it of any moment. The present application of the term is the only thing with which we are concerned.

In its general use it has two significations; one relating to the *faith*, the other to the *practice* of those to whom it is applied. You say that unitarians cannot be "regarded as christians in any correct sense of the word." The two senses here mentioned, it is believed, are the only ones in which the word can with any propriety be used. The latter of these, indeed, is acquired and forced, and is comparatively of modern origin. It is sanctioned, however, by custom. In its correct use, the word is employed exclusively to designate those, who believe in Christ as the Messiah, and who profess to receive him as their Master and Saviour. Why are you entitled to the name of Calvinist, or any other person to the patronymic of the leader, whom he professes to follow? Is it not from this circumstance only, because you profess to receive him as a leader? And so it is with the name of christian. All, who look up to Christ as their head, and acknowledge themselves believers in him, and subjects of his kingdom, are entitled to the christian name.

The question is therefore to be settled, whether unitarians are among this number? You say they are not, and explain yourself in a sort of abridgement of the second, eighth, and tenth Letters of Andrew Fuller. But neither his assertions, nor yours after him, have

any weight on my mind. These are mere assertions, where nothing but plain facts, and manly argument, could be of any value. If it can be supposed, that you have no knowledge even of the most prominent outlines of our faith, some apology may be found in your ignorance. But this can hardly be supposed. You cannot be ignorant, that in the sincerity of our hearts we believe in the truth and divine character of the religion of Jesus, as firmly as you, or any of your brethren; that we consider, and have infinite joy in believing, his religion to be a revelation from God; that we believe him to have performed miracles by divine power; that we receive as sacred and true every word he spoke; that his commands carry with them in our view the same authority, as the commands of God; that our hope of immortality rests wholly on the veracity of his word, and a belief in his resurrection; that we look for salvation only on the conditions he has made known; and that we believe faith, repentance, and holiness essential to all, who would be his true followers, and be partakers of the rewards he has promised. With this knowledge of our sentiments, which you must have had, before you could imagine yourself qualified to write on the subject, the question may well be asked, by what authority you have denied to us the *name* of christians? Your bare assertion is all that appears. This is not enough. If those who have this faith, and cherish these feelings, and hold fast these hopes, are not to be *called christians*, tell us what they are to be called.*

*The Rev Thomas Hartwell Horne, in his late work, entitled *Plain Reasons for being a Christian*, has given a very concise, and, in my view, a very correct definition of the term. "To be a Christian," says he, "or in other words, to believe in the Christian Religion, is to believe that Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his

In regard to the second, or *popular* sense of the term, I shall not say much in this place, because it comes under a topic, which will be particularly discussed hereafter. Good men, who are zealous in acquiring a knowledge of the doctrines and duties of the christian religion, and in conforming to the precepts of Christ, are called *Christians*. And are there no such among unitarians? The person, who strives to obey the laws of the gospel, who is habitual in the exercises of piety and devotion, loves and aids his neighbour, subdues his passions, resists temptation, proscribes hurtful pleasures, hates vice, condemns and shuns the ways of the wicked, bears up with fortitude in adversity, submits cheerfully to the will of God, is penitent for his past sins, relies on the promises of Christ, endeavours to imbibe his spirit, and walk in his steps,—every such person is cordially acknowledged by all men, not only to deserve the *name*, but to sustain the *character* of a christian. And when this character is seen, no one thinks of asking what his religious creed is, before he gives him the name. Now I humbly trust, that there are as many persons of this description among unitarians, as among other denominations. In respect to the second sense of the term, therefore, as well as the first, your harsh and ungracious sentence of exclusion is passed without a semblance of justice.*

Apostles, were endued with divine authority; that they had a commission from God to act and teach as they did; and that he will verify their declarations concerning future things, and especially concerning a *future life*, by the event;—in short, it is cordially and sincerely to receive the Scriptures, as the only rule of our faith and practice, as the foundation of our hopes and fears.” These characteristics of christian faith accord perfectly with the views of unitarians.

* I cannot forbear quoting here an excellent passage from President Davies’ Sermon on the *Import of the Christian Name*. It breathes

Let us look for a moment at the process, by which you have come to your extraordinary results. You say, "he, who does not receive the doctrine of man's guilt and depravity by nature, and the doctrine of the divinity and atonement of the Son of God, and of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, does not receive the gospel, and is, consequently, no Christian." And just before, you pronounce these doctrines to be "the essence of Christianity." And again you add, "it follows with irresistible force of evidence, to my mind, that he who rejects those fundamental truths, however respectable, virtuous, and apparently devout he may be, *rejects christianity* as really, though not under precisely the same circumstances, yet as *really* as any

a spirit of liberal feeling and enlightened charity, which may be recommended with some hope of profit to all such, as think themselves alone worthy of the name of christian. "To be a christian," says he, "is not enough now-a-days, but a man must also be something more and better; that is, he must be a strenuous bigot to this or that particular church. But where is the reason or propriety of this? I may indeed believe the same things, which Luther or Calvin believed; but I do not believe them on the authority of Luther or Calvin, but upon the sole authority of Jesus Christ, and therefore I should not call myself by their name, as one of their disciples, but by the name of Christ, whom alone I acknowledge as the author of my religion, and my only Master and Lord. If I learn my religion from one of these great men, it is indeed proper I should assume their name. If I learn it from a parliament or convocation, and make their acts and canons the rule and ground of my faith, then it is enough for me to be of the established religion, be that what it will. I may with propriety be called a mere conformist; that is my highest character; but I cannot properly be called a Christian, for a Christian learns his religion, not from acts of parliament, or from the determination of councils, but from Jesus Christ and his gospel." p. 229.

The pious and persecuted Baxter long ago expressed similar sentiments in fewer words, when he said, "I am a christian, a mere christian; of no other religion; my church is the Christian Church."

Deist ever did; and that he cannot, with propriety, be called a Christian *in any sense.*" Here then we have the substance of your charges, and the amount of your argument; if argument, indeed, that can be called, which proves nothing, unless it be the facility with which you bring yourself to a conviction, in opposition to the stern authority of sober reason, the voice of charity, and the common sense of the wise and virtuous.

You have defined christianity in your own way; you have made its essence to consist in doctrines of your own choosing, and then declared, that whoever does not receive your definition, and believe the doctrines you have selected, is "no christian." But what is this to the purpose? Your convictions may be very good in your own estimation, and may have a preponderating influence on your own mind. I am willing to allow this, and yet maintain, that you had no authority to make your individual opinion the groundwork of so solemn and unqualified a denunciation against a large class of persons, who are as sincere in their faith, and value it as dearly as you, or any other christian. What did our Saviour mean, when he left to his followers the command, "Judge not that ye be not judged;" and the apostle, when he asked, "Who art thou that judgest another?" Did they mean, that we should solemnly charge our brethren, who cannot think as we do, with "rejecting christianity as really as any *Deist*," or with being unworthy to "be called Christians in any sense?" Did they not rather mean, that our imperfections should teach us to distrust ourselves, and that the daily evidences which we have of our own mistakes, errors, and faults, should make us cautious how we assume the office of censor, in rashly condemning the opinions and motives of others? Such is the letter

and spirit of the gospel. Let others decide how widely it differs from the letter and spirit of your charges.

You call total depravity, and the other doctrines, which you enumerate, "the *essence* of Christianity, the very life and glory of the system." And yet you do not embrace in this enumeration a belief in the existence, attributes, and superintending providence of God, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the truth and divine authority of his word, the necessity of faith, repentance, and a holy life, nor a future state of just retribution. Now supposing the doctrines, which you bring together, are true; how is it possible for them to comprise the *essence* of the christian religion, without these fundamental articles? Take these away, and what will remain? Surely nothing. Your *essence* itself depends on the truth of these. But every doctrine, which you have combined to form this *essence*, might be blown to the winds, and still these great principles of christian faith, piety, righteousness, and hope, would remain the same, impose the same obligations to obedience and right practice, open the same vivid prospects of future glory to the righteous, and of future suffering and despair to the wicked.

Such are the nature and grounds of your severe judgment, respecting the faith and claims of unitarians. Let us trace your rule of judging to some of its applications. It as effectually deprives all other denominations, except Presbyterians, of the faith and name of christians, as it does Unitarians. If you are consistent, and adhere to your rule, you can never give the title of christians to Hopkinsians, Arminians, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, nor indeed to any sect, which differs from the one, whose creed you embrace. For the whole amount of all you have said on the

subject, proves Unitarians not to be Christians for this one reason, and this alone, namely, that they deviate from *your* standard. Others may come nearer to your mark, and then they will be nearer to being christians, but will not be entirely such, and consequently cannot be called such, till they look at all things from the same position as yourself, and see them in the same shape, colour, and dimensions.

Now I beg you will reflect for a moment, and reflect seriously, on the deplorable consequences to which this will lead. It is true, you have declared, "that you give to unitarians what you are willing to receive from them." That is, as you call them no christians, you are willing they should call you the same. This is certainly fair. It is quite obvious, that we have just as much right as you to select a set of doctrines, and declare that they constitute the *essence* of christianity; and we, and all christians, have an equal right to call others hard names for not receiving what we decide to be these essential doctrines. But look at the consequences. The Catholics may call you no christian for not believing in the Seven Sacraments, for rejecting the doctrine of the real presence, denying the virtue of extreme unction, the use of the cross in baptism, the apostolical vicarship of the Pope, and for many other things, in which they think you have wofully departed from the true faith, and for which you are justly to be ranked among heretics. The Hopkinsians may call you no christian for what they consider your fundamental errors, respecting the origin and nature of sin, the nature of holiness, the consequences of Adam's transgression, the extent of the atonement, the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the ground of justification. The Arminians may do the same for

what they think your unscriptural and irrational doctrines of absolute decrees, total depravity, and imputed sin. The Baptists may take from you the name of christian, because, in their view, you hold to a dangerous error respecting one of the sealing ordinances of the christian religion, and have never been properly initiated into the visible church of Christ. Nay, more, each and every one of these different sects, and of all the sects in Christendom, may insist, that all the others have no right or title to the christian name, and are to be regarded as maintaining such "dreadful," and "soul-destroying errors," that they ought to be excluded from all communion and fellowship with true christians.

Such is the practical result of the principle by which you profess to be guided. All sects think their doctrines as important and necessary, as you think yours; and just as much as you differ from them, they believe you to have wandered from the true christian faith. Suppose them all to take the liberty, which you have done, and fall to writing and preaching against the propriety of calling one another christians. Is it possible you can imagine any good purpose to be answered by such a course? Would it strengthen peace, harmony, love, and social order among men? Would it be in accordance with the heavenly precepts of the gospel, and the holy example of the Saviour? In these childish freaks of calling names, and in denying to others the appellation of Christians, which they claim and value, do you discover much of the meekness of wisdom, much of the magnanimity of a generous mind, much of the candour, forbearance, and brotherly kindness, which are at the very foundation of all rational piety, and social religious duty? Do you think they would help to kindle a ray of goodness in the heart, or call forth a particle of

love to God, or love to man? So far from it, that you could not devise a means by which the seeds of discord would be scattered more profusely, or be made to spring up with more riotous luxuriance.

Your rule will also exclude from the pale of the church, many of the ablest advocates of the christian scheme. Will you deny the name of christians to men, who have employed the best part of their lives, and all their talents and learning, in proving the truth of the christian religion, defending it against the cavils of infidelity, and endeavouring to establish its principles in the minds and hearts of all? This would be equally a glaring solecism in language, and an act of injustice to the memory of the great and good. It is, nevertheless, what your rule demands.

It is a truth well worthy of observation, and one on which we may be permitted to dwell in the present connexion, that many of the ablest and most distinguished advocates of christianity have been unitarians. And it is a fact equally notorious, that a larger number of them, than of any other single denomination, have written expressly on this subject. The name of Lardner is another name for piety, talents, learning. Few men have been distinguished for higher and sounder attainments; few have been more illustrious for the rare assemblage of virtues, which adorned their characters; and none, it may safely be said, *none* has investigated so patiently and thoroughly the whole grounds of christianity. Of his candour, sincerity, love of truth, and judicious zeal, it is sufficient proof, that his work is universally quoted by christians of all persuasions, as the very first in our language, or in any language, on this subject. It is a standard to which all refer, the storehouse from which succeeding writers have derived their

amplest treasures. Yet Lardner was a unitarian, and according to your mode of judging, no christian. That is, the man, who is universally allowed to have combined a greater number of qualifications, than any other, for the inquiry, and to have been more successful than any other in establishing the truth of christianity, is himself to be denied the name of christian!

The same remark will apply, with different degrees of force, to all unitarians, who have written in defence of the christian religion. The learned and pious Dr. Samuel Clarke is no longer to be called a christian, notwithstanding the powerful defence of christian truth, contained in his celebrated Lectures. Priestley, also, wrote largely on the evidences of christianity. Few writers have taken up the argument on so large a scale, or traced it with so much perspicuity and minuteness through all its bearings. Infidelity has never been met by a more formidable opponent. If there is less of condensed method and rigid logic in his arguments, than in those of some other writers, he is certainly unequalled in the fertility of his topics, his ingenious illustration, and in that lucid, persuasive mode of writing, which conducts the mind irresistibly to the point at which he aims. This was a subject in which he felt a peculiar, and a serious interest. It employed his youthful pen, and engaged the labours of his latest years. But notwithstanding a life thus spent in proving the truth, and impressing the importance of the christian religion, it is at length discovered, that Priestley was no christian!

Look back to the famous controversy, which sprung from a vain and subtle philosophy, and which was at its height a century ago in England. Who were the men, that laboured most successfully in baffling the talents, ingenuity, and learning, of Tindal, Bolingbroke, Chubb,

Morgan, Collins, and their numerous coadjutors? By far the most able opponents of these philosophers were unitarians. Read Dr. Clarke's early *Reflections on Toland's Amyntor*, and his powerful *Answer to Collins at a maturer age*; read Chandler's *Defence of the Christian Religion* in reply to Collins, which was highly commended by Archbishop Secker; read James Foster's eloquent *Defence of the Christian Revelation* against Tindal; read in Benson's *Reasonableness*, and in his *Reflections*, not only a confutation of the principal arguments of Deism, but an able defence of the christian scheme; read the numerous and excellent writings of Leland, successfully controverting infidelity in all its forms; read Whiston and Lowman against Collins, and Lowman against Morgan; read bishop Clayton against Bolingbroke;—read these writings, and others of a similar kind, which will readily come to your recollection, and then tell us whether christianity owes nothing to unitarians. Whoever will pursue the subject with candour and impartiality, will acknowledge, that no class of writers has done more to neutralize the poison of infidelity, or to establish on a firm foundation the kingdom of the Saviour. These are the men to whom you deny the name of christians.

In your Sermon you speak of Locke as a christian; but you certainly cannot suppose the definition of this term, which is contained in your Reply, will apply to the sentiments of Locke. I shall pass over the question for the present, which you have raised, respecting his unitarian sentiments. I will only remark, that when you expressed an opinion so decidedly opposed to universal belief, it would have been quite proper to give some reasons. And Locke must still be considered a unitarian, till he can be proved a trinitarian; a task, which it is not likely you will soon undertake. At all

events, he had no faith in the assemblage of articles, which you denominate the *essence* of christianity, and without believing which, you say, no one can be called a christian. His whole treatise on the Reasonableness of Christianity bears witness to this truth. For the leading object of that work is to show, that "the Gospel was written to induce men into a belief of this proposition, 'that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah,' which if they believed, they should have life."* He says nothing about total depravity, the atonement, the "sanctifying spirit of an Almighty Surety," nor any of your peculiar doctrines. Yet who has done more to elucidate the sacred scriptures, or to prove the consistency and reasonableness of the religion of Jesus? Your rule, however, will take from him the christian name.

Examples of unitarians, who have been zealous and able defenders of the christian faith, might be multiplied. Bonnet of Geneva is a memorable one. He has stated the argument with great compass of thought, and philosophical precision. I do not say, that Paley was a unitarian, but I believe he was, because I have seen nothing in his writings, which indicates the contrary. Several unitarians now living, both in England and this country, have written on the evidences of christianity with such earnestness, force of reasoning, and eloquence, as do equal credit to their zeal, their piety, talents, and love of truth.

I will mention only one example more, and this of comparatively early date. It is that of Socinus. His treatise, on the Authority of the Sacred Scriptures, was translated into several languages, and read and admired throughout all Europe. Grotius is said to have drawn largely from this work; and it was highly praised even

* Reasonableness of Christianity, sec. ix.

by an English Bishop. The cause of christianity has seldom been more ably advocated, than in this little treatise. The author reasons like one, who felt the importance of the subject. His arrangement is not always the most happy, but his arguments are condensed and forcible. They display the workings of a powerful mind, striving to substantiate and impress the important truths of the christian religion. But all this is nothing with you. The mode of judging, which you have adopted, excludes him, as well as all the other illustrious defenders of the faith, whom I have mentioned, from the privilege of even having the *name* of christians.*

I have dwelt the longer on this point, to show the extreme absurdity of your rule. The men themselves, in whom christianity has found its firmest and most zealous supporters, and who have employed their best powers in proving its truth and value, are *not to be considered worthy of the christian name!* What shall we think of principles, which lead to such a result?

One thing has struck me very forcibly, and I believe some others, in reading your Sermon and Reply. Not a word is to be found about the *doctrine of election*. I am really at a loss to know how, as a conscientious Calvinist, you have dispensed with this doctrine, which

* The treatise *De Auctoritate Sacre Scripturæ* was first published in 1570, without the name of the author. An edition was afterwards published at Seville, by Ferrerius, a Jesuit, who intimated in the preface that he was the author; but he was detected, from having advanced sentiments in that place contrary to those in the work itself. It was at length published with the author's name, translated into Dutch and French, and printed in different parts of Europe. It was translated into English by E. Coombe, a clergyman of the Church of England, and published in 1731. This statement of facts is sufficient evidence of the high estimation in which it was held. Vorstius published it with notes, and also with remarks of certain Divines of Basil. It is found in Latin among the writings of Socinus, in the first volume of the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, p. 265.

is the very keystone of Calvinism. This was the great topic of discussion at the Synod of Dort, and we may perhaps say it was the sole cause of that Synod being convened. The growing heresy of Arminius consisted in asserting the *free will* of man, and the *free grace* of God, in opposition to the notion of an absolute predestination. In this heresy the Calvinists saw the ruin of their whole fabric. Hence the *five points*, established by a vote of the Synod of Dort, of which *election* is the beginning and the end. The members of the Westminster Assembly were equally careful to preserve the consistency of their scheme. "By the decree of God," they say, "for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.—Neither are any others redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will—to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."* This is the leading tenet of Calvinism. All mankind are totally depraved, according to this scheme, and naturally under God's wrath and curse. They can only be rescued by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But this sacrifice, although made by an "*Almighty Surety*," is sufficient for "the elect only." This is the *essence* of Calvinism. Take away election, and there is no certainty that any will be saved. Take this away, and Calvinism falls to the ground. I mean that Calvinism, which is set forth in the Confession of Faith, and adopted by the Presbyterian Church.

Since this is so vital a doctrine in the Calvinistic faith, it is a little surprising, that you should not once

* Confession of Faith, chap. iii. 3, 6, 7.

have hinted at it in your repeated enumerations of *essential* doctrines. Did this neglect arise from a reluctance to enforce a tenet, which has become so unpopular as not to be readily received? It is no uncommon thing, indeed, for professed Calvinists to declare themselves much aggrieved, when this doctrine is reckoned among the articles of their faith. This is a good omen. It testifies to the progress of truth, and the inefficiency of all human inventions, which do violence to the understanding of men. When a professor in one Calvinistic Theological Collège rejects the doctrine of *imputed sin*,* and a professor in another thinks it prudent to keep out of sight the most important tenet of his faith, there is much good ground for hope, that the light of truth, which is thus breaking out of darkness, will continue to multiply and extend its beams.†

The most remarkable feature in your Reply, after all, is the singularly positive and dogmatical manner, in which you express your views of the essential doctrines of christianity. You seem to assume it as an immutable principle, at the very outset, that you stand on the unas-

* Professor Woods, of Andover, says, "*The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity* in any sense, which those words naturally and properly convey, is a doctrine, *which we do not believe.*" But listen to the Assembly of Divines.—"*Our first parents being the root of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity.*" Confession of Faith, Chap. vi. It cannot be denied, that the Andover School has greatly improved upon this doctrine.

† It is very true, the founders of the Princeton Seminary have done what they could to guard against any such consequence. They have raised as strong barriers as possible against every thing like improvement, and closed most effectually every opening through which a single additional ray of light could penetrate. The Theological Professor, when he enters on his duties, it seems, is obliged to subscribe the following declaration, namely, "I do solemnly promise and engage, not to inculcate, teach, or insinuate, any thing

sailable eminence of truth. You manifest scarcely a shadow of respect for the opinions of any one, who differs from you; and you even deny that it is a proper office of charity to think it possible, that any such can be right. This is going much beyond popish infallibility. The Pope traces back his descent from the Apostles, and believes in the continually guiding influence of the Great Head of the Church, in preserving the true faith among men. According to the Catholic system, there is some reason for believing in the infallibility of men, who are thought to be divinely appointed, as depositaries of the true faith. Protestants have given up this notion, and now to *act upon it* is absurd. Locke has pertinently said, "let those, that in their words disclaim infallibility, disclaim it likewise in their actions." If we must have dictators in faith, let us go back to Popes and Councils. We shall then at least have the advantage of antiquity and numbers. But while we profess to walk in the light and liberty of conscience, and to call no one Master but Christ, let us think, and reason, and judge for ourselves, and not dictate to others. Let us act the part of fallible, as well as rational, and accountable beings.*

which shall appear to me to contradict or contravene, either directly or impliedly, any thing taught in the Confession of Faith, or Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church." *Assembly's Digest*, p. 247. A professor at Princeton, therefore, can never change his mind in regard to any of his theological sentiments, without a hypocritical concealment of his opinions, or a violation of his oath, in "teaching, inculcating, or insinuating" something, which he did not originally believe. This is in the genuine spirit of the dark ages, and the most sagacious scheme that could be devised to perpetuate ignorance and error.

* In reading some parts of your Reply, one is forcibly reminded of a Dedication to the Pope, prefixed to a satirical piece written by Sir Richard Steele. "The most sagacious persons," says the writer in

It is a bold and unjustifiable assumption of authority in any one, to decide on the faith of another, or to declare whether this other believes enough to be called a christian. It is a case, which is exclusively concerned with the conscience and conviction of the individual. Whoever is confident, that he has made the best exertions of which he is capable, and examined with seriousness, sincerity, a firm reliance on divine aid, and a proper sense of the importance of the subject, and then confesses himself to be a christian; or, in other words, whoever is conscientious in holding what he believes to be a true christian faith,—every such person is entitled to the name, and it is equally an encroachment on the claims of christian liberty, and the rights of conscience, to attempt to take it from him. It is in violation of the laws of peace, without sanction in the instructions and example of Christ, and in no accordance with the spirit of the gospel.

My next letter will be devoted to a consideration of the remarks contained under the third head of your Reply, and which relate to the moral and religious character of unitarians.

Yours,

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

addressing the Pope, “have not been able to discover any other difference between us, as to the main principle of all doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, but this one, that you *cannot* err in any thing you determine, and we *never do*. That is, in other words, you are INFALLIBLE, and we are ALWAYS IN THE RIGHT. We cannot but esteem the advantage to be exceedingly on our side in this case, because we have *all the benefits of infallibility, without the absurdity of pretending to it*, and without the uneasy task of maintaining a point so shocking to the understanding of men.”

SIXTH AND SEVENTH

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT
IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, AT PRINCETON,

ON HIS

CHARGES AGAINST UNITARIANS.

[From the Unitarian Miscellany.]

Baltimore:

JOHN D. TOY, PRINTER,
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1821.

SIXTH LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

SIR,

It must fully appear, by this time, into what mistakes you have unhappily fallen respecting the topics and tendency of unitarian preaching, and with what show of justice you have made and reiterated the charge, that, "this mode of preaching is more acceptable to the taste of carnal, worldly men, than any other kind of preaching." It must fully appear, with what singular infelicity you attempted to discuss a subject, which you had so slightly investigated, and more especially when it is realized, that the only possible tendency of your assertions was to the reproach and injury of the persons, whose religious opinions and character you have assumed the freedom thus to assail.

You next attempt a formal defence of your position, that *we look in vain for the monuments of the reforming and purifying power* of the unitarian system. You have at length come to the only point upon which the discussion was originally started; but even here, instead of redeeming other failures, your attempt has been if possible still more unsuccessful. Your defence, as far as it can be called a defence, is altogether hypothetical.

You prove nothing, cite no instances, adduce no facts. Instead of coming to plain statements and unequivocal examples, which alone can have any bearing on the subject, you inquire whether *sound conversions*, or *genuine revivals of religion* are known among unitarians? What is this inquiry to the purpose? The question relates simply to the *character* of those, who have embraced this faith, and not to the means by which this character has been formed; to the existing "monuments" of its power, and not to the manner in which these monuments have been reared. Why ask about conversions, if you find the fruits of conversion? To say these do not exist is begging the question; it is the *petitio principii* of the dialectician; taking for granted the very thing, which you were called on to prove.

You have evaded this the most important part of the subject, and drawn the attention of your readers to the good effects, which you say have been produced in particular cases by your own sentiments. After a vivid picture of this sort, you abruptly ask the question, whether "unitarianism can show such effects?" And then answer it as abruptly, "if it can, they are unknown to me." Do you think this good reasoning? Are you willing to judge of the effects of unitarianism "all over the world," by your personal observation? As you probably have never lived a week together in a society composed of unitarians, how is it possible, let these effects have been what they might, that they should not be *unknown* to you? Under such circumstances, how could you know the power of unitarian principles to subdue the stubborn will, soften the hardened heart, humble the proud, restrain the vicious, call forth the pious affections of the devout worshipper, promote christian harmony, purity, and love, and, in short, to ensure

the conduct of a sincere, humble, and faithful follower of Jesus? These are things, which work, or ought to work, silently in the heart, and show themselves in the temper and private character of individuals. The moment they are allowed to go abroad, and be blazoned to the world, they leave no trivial grounds for suspecting more of hypocrisy, than of humble piety, or of the movings of the holy spirit of God. Hence your argument for the immorality of unitarians, drawn from your ignorance of the actual effects of their principles, is as illogical as it is uncharitable. It is certainly extraordinary, that you should think it sufficient proof against the christian morals and piety of any sect, that such exercises as usually attend these graces were *unknown to you*, when your personal observation was so circumscribed, and your means of knowledge so limited.

It is no part of my undertaking to boast of the high religious attainments of those with whom I accord in sentiment, and unite in worship, or to hold them up as more holy than other christians, and ready to cry out on all occasions, like Jehu of old, "Come see my zeal for the Lord." I aim at nothing more than a plain defence, a bare vindication. I shall not, therefore, impose any tax upon your patience by going into a history of their conversions, or detailing remarkable instances of their piety, self denial, humility; of their patience in tribulation, and meekness under persecution; of their forbearance when assailed by the reproaches and scorn of the world; of their perseverance through evil report and good report in accomplishing what their principles and the voice of conscience dictate, and in line, of their joyful triumph over every calamity, even death itself, while sustained by the bright hopes, and cheering anticipations inspired by their views of the religion of

the Saviour. These things I willingly leave to speak for themselves, and have much reason to hope and trust, that they will speak loudly to every honest inquirer, and candid observer. Had you known more of the persons, with whose religious feelings you have dealt so harshly, I am constrained to believe you would have been less ready to ask, "who has ever heard" of these things?

But since you have brought this subject forward with a special view of inferring from your remarks a want of morals in unitarians, I am not disposed to dismiss it without further notice. Much, however, which is applicable in this place, has been anticipated in what was said concerning regeneration in my fourth letter. Two or three particulars will admit of further examination.

What strikes one most forcibly in your view of the subject, is, that you confound distinctions, and make no difference between conversion, and the object to be attained by conversion. Yet surely these are not the same thing. Conversion is a *means* for the attainment of a certain end. And what is this end, but such a measure of knowledge, virtue, piety, and holiness, as constitutes a truly religious character? Conversion is valuable only for its effects, and yet you speak of it as being itself the only thing of importance, and as if these effects could be produced in no way except by the influence of this doctrine, not as others think they ought to interpret it, but as you choose to interpret it yourself.

Admit the fact, that unitarians do not hold the necessity of conversion in the calvinistic sense; suppose them to believe that God is not limited in his power or wisdom, and may employ a great variety of means in bringing his rational creatures to a sense of their sins,

a knowledge of their duty, an humble contrition, sincere repentance, and practical holiness. By what process can these facts be framed into an argument against their moral character? Morality does not consist in a doctrine, an opinion, or a pretence. The apostle says, that *the fruit of the spirit is, in all, goodness, and righteousness, and truth*. Where this fruit appears, why do you stop to ask by what operations of the spirit it has been produced? Are you not contented, that God should have taken his own way? Unitarians hold as firmly as calvinists, that their sins must be forsaken, their wicked hearts renewed, and all their passions, thoughts, and affections, brought into subjection to the will of God, before they can expect his promised favour, or have any hopes of the rewards of his glory. But they do not, like calvinists, hold that God is restricted in the mode he may adopt to accomplish this purpose; nor do they consider the mode of greater moment, than the purpose itself.

As we proceed, it is desirable to have distinctly in mind the true import of the calvinistic notion of conversion. This may be discovered in the following extracts from the Confession of Faith. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, *and those only*, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his word and spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ.—This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, *who is altogether passive therein*, until, being quickened and removed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."* From

* Confession of Faith, chap. x. § 1. 2.

these words it seems, that the conversion of a sinner consists in a simple execution of a divine decree made from all eternity, without any regard to the future disposition or conduct of the person to be converted, or as it is expressed in another place, "without any foresight of faith or good works." The sinner has no concern in the work, for he is declared to be "altogether passive therein." This is plain language, and needs no illustration.

As unitarians, and many christians of other denominations, can find no such doctrine in the scriptures, but conceive all the positive parts, and, indeed, the whole tenour of scripture opposed to it, they cannot of course believe it in the sense in which it is here stated. And if they could find evidence, that the mode of irresistible influence is sometimes resorted to by the Deity to convert sinners, the powerful testimony of experience would convince them, that the doctrine which teaches the *necessity* of this mode under all circumstances, is most fallacious in its indications, and most injurious in its consequences.

If there be any truth, or any value in the doctrine, it must carry with it-self an unfailing testimony. That is, persons under the arbitrary operations of the spirit must have infallible means of knowing the fact, that they may not be deceived by their own imaginations, and be led into a false and dangerous security. An irresistible influence of the Deity is in all respects miraculous, and as such must operate with a violence on the established laws of the human constitution, which cannot be mistaken. And yet, what has been the test to which appeals have universally been made? Has it not been certain impressions, emotions, feelings, transports, ecstasies, which are usually the exuberant growth of a

warm imagination? Has there ever been an instance in which appeals have been made to the understanding? Has any one ever made it appear, that his intellect was enlightened, his judgment improved, or his wisdom increased by the irresistible agency of the divine spirit? No. How is it, then, that the spirit of God always acts upon that quality of our nature, which of all others is the most fallible, fluctuating, and deceptive? The very same effects, and to their fullest extent, which are urged as a proof of divine interposition, are frequently produced by natural causes, and exist where there is no renewal of heart, or reformation of character. Is it credible, that the Supreme Being descends into the hearts of men with a miraculous agency of his spirit, without giving them at the same time light and power to judge between his operations, and the deceptions of a heated imagination?

You will say, probably, that such persons as are really the objects of this agency, are never without a conviction, which with them amounts to absolute certainty. I am aware this is asserted by many, who are sincere, and have a confidence in the reality of their impressions. But in my mind, no stronger proof can be given of the fallaciousness of the doctrine. In the first place, their convictions come through the feelings and the fancy. And then, these persons are by no means always distinguished for more than ordinary purity of morals, or warmth of piety, so that it has been said, with too much truth, by a writer more distinguished for his genius than his piety, "if we are told a man is *religious*, we still ask, *what are his morals?*" And last of all, these persons often have totally opposite opinions respecting some of the most important articles of christian truth, which they all profess with equal confidence

to receive from a divine illumination. But the spirit of God can dictate only truth, and truth is always the same. With what encouragement can we rely on the convictions of those, who, with equal sincerity and confidence, make contradictory assertions? When it shall happen, that all persons, who profess to have immediate aid from above to free them from sin and enlighten them with truth, shall be found uniformly more zealous in doing the deeds of piety and love, than other christians of humbler pretensions; and when they shall agree in reporting the truths, which they have received from the instructions of the spirit, so far at least as to avoid contradictions and inconsistencies, they will exhibit better reasons for believing themselves actuated by the irresistible agency of the spirit of God.

Again, if a change is thus miraculously wrought, how does it happen, that in such a great number of instances the effect soon dies away? Look around among those, who have been the subjects of what are commonly called religious revivals, and observe how large a proportion return in a short time to their former condition and habits. The most zealous, confident, and ecstatic, will frequently be among the first to sink back to the apathy, from which at one time they imagined themselves to have been raised by the special agency of the Holy Spirit. Will you say that such are not truly converted, or that they resist the spirit? The first is certain, but of the last who is to judge? The person, who falls away, is as certain of being under a spiritual influence, as any one who retains this conviction for years, and even through his whole life. But falling away was a proof, that he was deceived. Very true; yet if one may be deceived for a month or a day, so may another as long as he lives. Hence it is the very excess of pre-

sumption to set up any pretensions, or make any assertions in the case.

Nor ought any one to rely on this kind of influence, till he can prove that the days of miracles have never ceased. Conversion, upon calvinistic principles, is as much a miracle, as it would be to stop the sun in its course, or raise the dead to life. But as no proof can be advanced, that miracles have been wrought since the time of the apostles even for great purposes, such as promoting the divine dispensations, or the general interests of mankind, where is the humility, modesty, or good sense in any man's pretending, that the Supreme Being has condescended to change the course of nature in his behalf, especially when the same argument, which he uses to convince himself of this fact, is used with equal assurance by others, who are confessedly deceived?

The calvinistic notion of conversion is, moreover, dangerous in its moral tendency. As the unconverted are *passive* in this work, they can do nothing till they are moved by the spirit; and you may be quite sure men will make no vigorous attempts to do what they are persuaded is impossible, particularly when these attempts interfere with their worldly wishes, demand sacrifices, and oppose their inclinations. They will proceed in the road of sin, and the way to ruin, with very little concern, while they feel that they are spell bound, and can turn neither to the right nor to the left, till the kind hand of heaven shall break their chains, take the scales from their eyes, and force them into the path of light, safety, and peace. And after this benevolent deed of heaven is performed, it by no means appears, that all danger is removed. Human nature is not changed. Much room is left to cherish many seeds of no good

promise, and to foster the growth of many unpropitious affections, whose fruits will add little to the stock of virtue, or to the ornament of a good life. The very self-complacency, which allows a man to rank himself in a station above his brethren, and to claim in his favour the peculiar agency of his Maker, denotes much of spiritual pride, and but little of that meek and lowly spirit inculcated by the example, doctrines, and commands of our Saviour. The doctrine in question, with its various appendages and outworks of election, reprobation, total depravity, human inability, and compulsory grace, approves itself to my understanding as one of the most immoral and pernicious, that has ever been started as a doctrine of christianity. It does comparatively little mischief, because it is seldom believed, except in connexion with other doctrines, which serve as a sort of counterpoise to its perverting tendency. History tells us of little, that we could desire to remember, respecting the morals of that sect, which has made this doctrine the leading tenet of its belief.*

* The Antinomians make election and irresistible grace the prominent features of their faith. "As the elect," they say, "cannot fall from grace, nor forfeit the divine favour, so it follows, that the wicked actions they commit, and the violations of the divine law, with which they are chargeable, are not *really sinful*, nor are to be considered as instances of their departing from the law of God; and that consequently, they have no occasion either to forsake their sins, or to break them off by repentance." *Mosheim's Church History, Vol. V. p. 412.*

They maintain, that "the elect cannot possibly do any thing displeasing to God, and that consequently no sins, however monstrous, would at all impair or endanger their everlasting blessedness." *Grant's Summary, Vol. II. p. 499.*

Such is the literal import of the doctrine when undisguised and un-mixed with others of a more rational and moral nature. That its effects on the morals, when left to have its free and natural tendency, have been most pernicious, will abundantly appear to any one who will be at the trouble of turning to the above references.

History also affords another dismal picture of the deplorable effects of this doctrine, in the annals of fanaticism. Men have gone mad in the belief, that their frenzy was the inward workings of the spirit of God. Next have come murders and rapines, persecutions and tortures, hatred and malice, and every detestable vice, which could disgrace human nature and demoralize society. Keep within the compass of the Reformation, and run through the records of fanaticism from the fratricide of Alphonsus Diaz, to the piteous delusions, which in recent times have bewildered the followers of Huntington, Brothers, and Southcott. The madness of Muncer, Stubner, and Storck, who kindled a civil war in Germany, sacrificed the lives of many credulous followers, and committed the greatest excesses under pretence of being actuated by a divine impulse; the wild reveries, which broke out in so many shapes of intolerance and cruelty during the reign of the unfortunate Charles, and the existence of the Commonwealth; the ravings of Muggleton and Reeves, who declared it to be the unpardonable sin to reject what they called their spiritual message; the scorching zeal of the Puritans, which was ready to burst out with its consuming fires upon all, who did not profess to seek the Lord under the same influences as themselves,—these facts and events, with numerous others of a similar nature, have been so many practical illustrations of the doctrine of conversion by an irresistible agency of the divine spirit.

Now we frankly confess we cannot receive a doctrine as coming from God, not a trace of which we can find in the scriptures, which is so fallacious in the testimony it gives of a divine origin, which is so defective in its practical tendency, and which has actually been made an instrument in bringing down the greatest disorders,

evils, and wretchedness upon the church, and upon society. The only authority on which it rests, is the testimony of individuals. And in what does this consist? It appeals to certain emotions, feelings, and frames of mind, which may come as readily from rational and mechanical, as from spiritual sources. Speaking of the particulars of this testimony, the eloquent James Foster observes, "They give a handle to every wretched enthusiast to impute his ravings, and follies, and wild starts of imagination, to the *spirit of the living God*. And thus they consecrate delusion and imposture, and, if these be of a licentious and impure tendency, enable them with the more ease to extirpate the natural seeds of virtue, and corrupt the morals."*

From what has been said, it is to be inferred that unitarians differ from calvinists not in the object to be attained by conversion, but respecting the manner by which it is attained. Unitarians hold to a divine influence, and that all men are converted by this influence,

* *James Foster's Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 111. The natural effects of this doctrine are not unaptly portrayed by Bishop Hoadly, in what he says of the extent to which some persons pursue the doctrine of Christ's merits as flowing from imputed righteousness, or a satisfaction. Speaking of those, who are mistaken in the terms of divine acceptance, he says, "They are all such as, (though they do not say it and speak it aloud, in so many words, yet,) think and speak in such a manner of the merits of Christ's sufferings, and the imputation of his personal holiness to believers, as to make his moral laws of none effect, and to render all virtue in Christians a poor, insignificant, unnecessary matter; unless it be the great virtue of applying the merits of Christ to ourselves, a virtue, which they who have most spirits are most frequently observed to be masters of, and which hath been too often seen to be founded upon the greatest degree of confidence and the greatest degree of guilt, mixed and tempered together by a strong fancy and imagination." *Hoadly on the Terms of Acceptance with God*, p. 77.

but they do not believe it to be irresistible, or miraculous. They conceive that God is always ready to second their good intentions and purposes, to aid their virtuous efforts, listen to their prayers, show mercy to the penitent, and to pardon their sins when repented of and forsaken. They believe conversion to be the work of God, not in the way of an arbitrary, irresistible agency, but by the innumerable motives and inducements, which he employs to bring men to a just sense of their duty, a deep reverence of his character, love of his laws, and a habitual desire for purity of mind, and holiness of life. Whatever leads to these results, may be considered as proceeding from the spirit of God. This spirit may operate through good instructions, or any thing, in fact, which disposes the mind to thoughtfulness and serious inquiry. Sudden and deep afflictions, an impressive sermon, certain passages in the word of God, may, by the agency of the divine spirit, be brought down upon the soul with a power, which will terminate in conversion by opening the eyes of men to their true character, and causing them to see the folly and danger of sin. But in these operations, there is no force or compulsion; nothing which may not be resisted, and which is not resisted by all, who, under the same circumstances, receive no impression.

This is consistent with the scripture view of the subject. Conversion is never represented there as coming from an irresistible act of divine power, or as being brought about in consequence of a divine decree. We are told to "grieve not the spirit of God." But why thus told, unless the spirit may be grieved, or resisted? "Repent ye. therefore, and be converted," says the apostle. But why this command, if we have not power to obey it, and are to be *passive*, till it shall please God to

raise us up by a miracle? St. Paul's conversion was miraculous, and is the most remarkable one recorded in scripture, and yet, in his speech before Agrippa, he says, that he "was not *disobedient* to the heavenly vision," intimating, as a learned writer has observed, that his freedom of choice was not restrained, but that his conversion was on his part an act of voluntary obedience and virtue.

In your Sermon you said, that the position you had taken could easily be illustrated and confirmed by tracing the history of American Unitarianism. You were called on to undertake this task as a duty of justice, and to compare the results with the history of Presbyterianism, and let the world see by a fair parallel in what respects unitarians have fallen so immensely behind their brethren in morals and piety, as to be ranked among Mohammedans and Jews, and not to deserve the name of christians. No request could be more reasonable; and considering the extent and serious nature of your charges, it could hardly be doubted that you would comply with it most readily. Your own vindication, if nothing else, would seem to have been a motive sufficiently powerful. All the testimony which can possibly be adduced in your favour, depends on having this point thoroughly and satisfactorily cleared up. To meet the subject fairly, it should have been the theme, the cardinal topic, of your whole Reply.

But so far from this, it is actually despatched in one short sentence. "I do not intend," you observe, "to follow this gentleman far, in the comparison which he so zealously and confidently urges, between Presbyterians and Unitarians, on the score of purity of morals." That is, you decline making the comparison, by which alone the truth of your assertions can be substantiated.

The question is, whether unitarians are less moral as a sect than other sects? This question must be decided, if decided at all, by a comparison. You have answered it in the affirmative, but without proof. Those who come under your censure, do not think your individual authority sufficient, in a case of so much importance to them. They do not approve the tribunal which you have instituted, and as they recognize no Inquisition, they think it a duty, and claim the privilege to protest against your decisions. They believed you to have gone upon false premises, and accordingly you were desired to review your ground, and at all events give the public a detail of the facts and reasons, by which you felt yourself bound to reveal to the world the moral disability, and licentious habits of unitarians.

Nothing more was asked of you, than to perform what you said might easily be done, namely, to let the voice of history speak in your behalf, implying, it is true, what certainly was not unreasonable, that you would substitute facts for conjectures and insinuations, and soften the boldness of your charges by the formality of a few plain statements and direct proofs. Examine the history of unitarianism with minuteness and severity; trace its progress through every channel; bring to the light of open day the secret mischiefs which it has been working; let the lineaments of immorality, with which you aver it to be so odiously disfigured, be exhibited in their boldest relief; in short, give a *true* picture as highly wrought as you please, and then place it by the side of a similar sketch of Presbyterianism, and I venture to affirm, that no unitarian will desire to have his cause presented in a more favourable light, or wish the public to possess a better confutation of your charges.

After thus declining to go into the examination, which was so essential to the merits of the cause, you return again to the *tendency of principles*, and appeal to the records of past events for proofs of the good effects of calvinism. You express yourself in the following interrogations. "Now I appeal to all impartial readers, who have the least knowledge of ecclesiastical history, whether those who have embraced the general system of christian doctrine, designated by the name of Calvinism, have not been in all ages distinguished as '*the stricter sort*' of professing christians? Have they not always been reproached by the laxer classes as 'austere,' 'puritanical,' and enemies of even many 'innocent indulgences?'" An appeal so formal and confident cannot be met with more fairness I presume, than by bringing distinctly before us some of the prominent particulars to which it refers. As my limits are narrow, a very small number must suffice, but they shall be such as have marked the strong features of calvinism.

Let us begin with the founder of this system. What does history report respecting the influence of his principles on his own mind, temper, and character? Has there ever been a more violent or unrighteous persecutor, than Calvin? What page of history is stained with darker blots, than those which narrate some of the events of his life? Look at his violent abuse and cruel persecutions of his friend Castalio, a man of great learning, moderation, and piety, against whom he uttered the grossest language, and procured a decree of banishment for no other reason, than that he had the independence to assert and maintain opinions, which differed from his own. The unfortunate, though less worthy, Bolsec shared a similar fate. Every one, indeed, who presumed to doubt his infallibility, whether friend or foe, was made to feel

the effects of his turbulent passions. But the darkest and deepest stigma on his character, was his treatment of Servetus, and it is one, which his ardent admirers have laboured with total want of success to remove, or even to diminish. Servetus had for many years been his confidential friend and correspondent. He could not subscribe the creed of Calvin, and as Calvin could not convince him by argument and persuasion, he resorted to stronger means. He accused him of heresy, procured his imprisonment, commenced against him a criminal process, and was thus the original and chief cause of his sentence of death, and his murder at the stake. He afterwards declared his warmest approbation of this event in letters to his friends, and expressed himself in the most intemperate language. Even in his commentaries on the Bible, he calls Servetus a "profligate fellow, a knave, and an obscene dog."*

* The rage of Calvin seems first to have been excited on account of certain questions in theology, which Servetus had proposed to him, but which Calvin did not answer to his satisfaction. Calvin could not bear opposition, and Servetus was not to be convinced without a reason. One of the unworthy acts of Calvin in procuring his condemnation, was the producing of a manuscript at his trial, which Servetus had sent to him long before for his examination and judgment, but which had never been printed.

To show the spirit with which he meditated and prosecuted this business, it is enough to quote what he said in a letter, which Bolsee and Grotius saw in the original, "that if this *heretic* should fall into his hands, he would order it so, that it should cost him his life." And after the unholy act was done, he boasted of "having exterminated Michael Servetus the Spaniard."

The authority for these facts, and others equally disgraceful, may be seen in a very circumstantial and interesting account of the life, writings, and death of Servetus, contained in the *Monthly Repository*, vol. i. and v. See also the *Cambridge General Repository*, vol. iii.; *Wright's History of Persecutions*, p. 345; *Mosheim*, vol. iv. p. 436, 488.

Such was the character of him, who first matured and embodied the doctrines, which now go under his name. Do these historical facts argue much in favour of the moral tendency of the principles you defend? Calvin was the more inexcusable, as he had himself deserted the church of Rome, and professed to be an advocate for free inquiry. It is certainly unfortunate for your appeal to history, that few names have descended to posterity, bearing feeble testimony of the persons to whom they belonged having been under the purifying influence of religious principles, than that of Calvin.

The commotions in Holland, which preceded and followed the Synod of Dort, and which brought the virtuous and inflexible patriot, Oldenbarneveltdt, to the block, and consigned the illustrious Grotius to perpetual imprisonment, were excited by the Calvinists. The spirit of intolerance, which arose to so fervent a heat in Calvin, raged at this period with scarcely less violence in his followers. The Arminians had struck out of their creed the doctrine of absolute decrees, because they could neither find it in the Scriptures, nor believe it. This was the offence that kindled a flame of persecution in the Calvinists, which lasted for years, drove many of the Arminians into exile, immured others in prisons, silenced their preachers, suppressed their religious assemblies, and inflicted universally every species of severity. Even at the Synod of Dort, which was pretended to be summoned for the purpose of a mutual conference, the Arminians were treated as heretics, and rudely denied the privilege of explaining and defending their sentiments. They were dealt with as criminals, and condemned as such.

The history of Holland during these disastrous times affords the most striking illustration of the influence of

calvinistic principles, when allowed to act without opposition. The Calvinists were the stronger party; they professed to act wholly from motives of religion; and all the enormities practised on their opponents are justly ascribed to this source.*

It will not be easy, perhaps, to trace the effects of calvinism with much precision in England. Civil and religious causes have been so much blended in that country since the origin of calvinism, as to render it a difficult task to distinguish between them. What with the Puritans, the favourers of the English Prelacy, and of Papacy, during the high commotions of church and state, it is impossible to tell how much should be put to the account of selfishness, party zeal, bigotry, the tendency of bad principles, or of a correct faith, and genuine piety. One thing, however, amidst this chaos of uncertainty, stands forth prominent and indisputable. When the calvinists had dominion, they showed a spirit of intolerance not a whit inferior to that of their Genevan master, or their brethren at Dort. Witness the ordinance of the Presbyterian parliament against heresy, in which it was decreed, that any one, who should be guilty of certain *opinions*, which were defined and declared to be heretical, "*should suffer the pains of death, as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy.*"† This was walking in the precise steps of

* See *Mosheim's Church History*, vol. v. chap. 3. *North American Review*, vol. vi. p. 185. Oldenbarneveldt opposed the convocation of the Synod of Dort, and maintained, that the States-General had no authority on matters of religion. See *Maclaine's Note in Mosheim's History*, vol. v. p. 451.

† This act was passed May 2, 1648. Neal says, "This was one of the most shocking laws I have met with, and shows that the governing Presbyterians of these times would have made a terrible use of their power, if it had been supported by the sword of the civil ma-

Calvin. It is a case of importance, because it discovers the feelings of the most intelligent and influential men among the calvinists, and is thus an accurate index to the impressions and inclinations of the less informed multitude.

It is hardly necessary to call your mind to the first settlers of New-England. The odious effects of their intolerance and persecutions are not to be forgotten by any one, who has looked at the history of those times. For the honour of religion, and even of humanity, we should be willing to have them forgotten. But when appealing to history for the influence of certain doctrines, justice and truth demand a fair report. The laws made against the heresies of Quakers by the early colonists were, if possible, more unhuman than those of the Presbyterian parliament. They were rigorously put in execution, and in several instances the punishment of death was actually inflicted.* The first Baptists, who came into the country, were also treated with great severity, and punished in various ways for their heresy. Now the persons, who ran into these excesses, were cal-

gistrate." *Neal's History*, vol. iii. p. 497. Among the heresies which were to be punished with death, was the denying, "That Christ is not God equal with the Father,—or that the Godhead and Manhood are distinct natures." Imprisonment was threatened to such as maintained, "That man by nature hath free will to turn to God,—that the soul of man sleeps, when the body is dead,—that man is bound to believe no more than by his reason he can comprehend." *Ibid.*

* "The Quakers," says Belknap, "were at first banished, but this proving insufficient, a succession of sanguinary laws was enacted against them, of which imprisonment, whipping, cutting off the ears, boring the tongue with a hot iron, and banishment on pain of death, were the terrible sanctions." *History of New Hampshire*, vol. i. p. 90. For some curious remarks on this subject, and a further confirmation of what is here said, See *Mather's Magnalia Christi*, Book vii. c. 4.

vinists of "the stricter sort," who embraced the dogmas of this faith in their fullest extent, and even while committing these outrages against the laws of our common nature, imagined themselves acting under the imperious guidance of their religious principles.

Such is the influence of calvinism as testified by history. How far your appeal proves favourable to your position, let the impartial decide. The particulars here selected are leading features in the history of Calvinism; and it is remarkable, that where the principles of this faith have been most prevalent, and met with least opposition, their evil effects have been most severely felt. In Geneva, where nearly all were calvinists, Castalio, Bolsec, and others were banished, and Servetus was murdered; in Holland, where opposition was stronger, and the influence of milder principles had some weight, the tide of persecution ran with less violence; in England, for similar reasons, its violence was still less, not theoretically, but practically, not in default of inclination, but of power, and of public countenance; in New England, the scenes of Geneva were again acted over, because all were calvinists, and the natural asperity of their sentiments was not softened by intercourse with others, whose views were more rational and temperate.

I intended to examine your appeal to history in another light, but this letter has already extended so far as to leave me but little room. It would be to the purpose to make some inquiries into the historical grounds on which you boast of the epithets, *strict*, *austere*, and *puritanical*, as applied to calvinists. What has gained them the honour of having the exclusive appropriation of these epithets? I believe no calvinist has before thought of claiming them as tokens of the religious purity of his sect. Is it true, that they have ever been employed to

denote the sincere religion of the heart? To call a man *austere* and *puritanical*, is at once to insinuate, that you have suspicions of his honest professions and latent piety. If I am not greatly mistaken, this is the universal sense of mankind; and if the inquiry were pursued, I have no doubt that the origin of these epithets would be found in the features of calvinism just portrayed. I would only infer, that the use of these words adds no strength, but rather weakness, to your argument for the moral tendency of calvinism.

I would make the same inference on another consideration. There has been no sect, probably, whom the world would more readily agree in calling *austere*, *puritanical*, and *of the stricter sort*, than the Pharisees of old, and yet our Saviour gives us no flattering picture of their morals or piety. Why may not the words have the same meaning, when applied to a modern sect, whether composed of calvinists, or those of any other faith? Do you reply, that the Pharisees were hypocrites and pretenders, thinking more of outward appearances, than of inward purity? That is true, and it is the very reason why we call them austere and puritanical. No one would apply these epithets to the apostles. But why not, except that their sincerity and piety were never doubted? If it had always been thus with all christians, if there never had been any one, *qui aliud est, et aliud simulat*, the use of these words, which you think an indication of the superior morals of calvinists, would never have been known.

I shall next examine your notion of Christian Charity, as stated under the fourth head of your Reply.

Yours,

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

SEVENTH LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

SIR,

The fourth division of your Reply is occupied in explaining your views of christian charity. As this service was gratuitous on your part, and not called for by the original conditions of the subject, I should not think it necessary to bring your remarks under consideration, were it not, that you have contrived to deduce from them a sort of apology for the harsh and revolting aspect of your charges.

You introduce the subject in the following words. "My Baltimore accuser dwells much and pathetically on what he considers a gross violation of christian charity, in speaking as I have done of unitarians." And then you go on to inform your readers, that this *accuser* takes charity to "consist in entertaining a favourable opinion of others, however widely they may differ from us on the most essential points; in supposing that they have inquired after truth as candidly as we have done; and in taking for granted, that there is as much reason to hope they will be finally accepted of God, as that we ourselves shall be accepted." Against this sense of the term you loudly bear your testimony, and affirm, that "though current enough in common society, among a thousand other popular crudities, it is certainly not found in scripture, and ought to receive no

countenance from any accurate thinker." After this formality of statement, and freedom of censure, your readers could hardly be prepared to learn, that the word charity is not once mentioned in my letter, as being necessarily understood in any definite sense. It is never used except incidentally, and in each instance I should be willing, that your own meaning should be affixed. I had said, that the censorship you exercised, and the judgment you passed against unitarians, were "at variance with the letter and spirit of the Gospel of the Saviour, and even the common principles of charity," and I hold this to be equally true, in whatever sense you may choose to receive the word charity. And yet, upon the strength of this phrase, and this alone, you talk about my *dwelling much and pathetically* on what I consider a *gross violation* of this virtue. But it is enough to have mentioned these things, without attempting to conjecture by what accidents you were led into them. They conducted you to the subject of charity, and to this I propose at present to confine my attention.

I will commence with your definition. "The word charity, as used in scripture is equivalent to the word *love*. To exercise charity towards another, in the language of the Bible, is to love him. I may, therefore, exercise the most perfect charity towards one, whose principles I reprobate, and whose conduct I abhor, and ought to abhor." Before I examine the merits of this definition, as founded on the language and spirit of scripture, allow me to ask one or two questions. You make the term *charity* exactly synonymous with *love*. When you speak of loving a man, what is the specific object of your affection? Is not this comprised in such of his moral qualities, as come within your notice, and gain your approbation? Take a man's principles and his conduct away, and what is left, which you can either

love or hate? His principles are interwoven with all the moral elements of his nature, and his conduct is the only test we can have of the rectitude and purity of his motives; or, in other words, the principles and the conduct constitute the whole moral man. Now what kind of love is that, which is extended to a person whose principles are to be reprobated, and whose conduct is to be abhorred? Surely not the love of a virtuous, pious mind. Such a mind can love only virtue and piety. Hence the very terms of your definition should have proved to you its looseness and fallacy, and suggested the necessity of a virtue essentially different in its operations from the general principle of love; a virtue by which the compassion and good affections of our nature may be brought into exercise, in favour even of the unprincipled and the vicious, whom we cannot in any proper sense of the word love, except in proportion as we are willing to dispense with holiness and virtue in ourselves.

And again, on the principles of calvinism it is impossible for the charity, which you define, to be extended to any but a very small part of the human race. How can a good man *love* any of his fellow beings, who are under a sentence of eternal reprobation by an unalterable decree of God, who are totally depraved, destitute of all good and wholly inclined to all evil, whose every deed is wickedness, and whose every thought is rebellion against their Maker? If this be possible, it is a mystery in ethics, which I confess my inability to solve. No good man could love such beings, because every thing in them must be wicked, odious, and repulsive. He might, even under these circumstances, have for them a fellow feeling, or an affection, which the world have united in calling charity, because this dreadful condition would not be their fault, but their misfortune in having been born into the world. Calvinism, therefore, requires

something more, than your general virtue of love, unless it would teach its advocates to withhold all civility and kindness from the great mass of men, who were either brought into the world by the Deity with the express purpose of making them eternally miserable, or who have not yet been released from the bondage of their inherent depravity by a miraculous visitation of divine grace.

But these distinctions, you will say, perhaps, are "popular crudities," the pastimes of erring reason, which may be well enough in common use, but are not sanctioned by the Scriptures, and "ought to receive no countenance from any accurate thinker." That charity requires us to think favourably of the opinions of our brethren, to suppose them sincere and conscientious in the search of truth, and to indulge a hope, that they may be in a fair way of meeting the divine acceptance, you consider a vulgar notion, and "assert with confidence," that it makes no part of the true scripture doctrine. This was a point of much importance in your apology, or defence, for if your position can be made out, then it follows, that unitarians are beside themselves to imagine any want of charity in those, who, in their kind solicitude, call them heretics, utter anathemas against their opinions, and in the spirit of christian love console them with the comforting declarations, that they are not christians at all, and no more in the way of salvation than Mohammedans and Jews, that they cling to "dreadful, soul destroying errors," and in their morals are to be numbered among the loose and licentious, upon whose lives religion has no purifying power. These are all to be taken as the genuine fruits of charity, since it is made to appear, that they may be accompanied with a due degree of scriptural love.

Let us come now to the primary object of inquiry,

and endeavour to ascertain what the Scriptures teach respecting the virtue of charity, and whether it be not allowable to exercise this virtue towards the sincere *opinions* of our fellow christians.

When you say, that "in the language of Scripture charity is equivalent to the word love," I know not what you mean, unless it be that the original Greek word, which denotes the general principle of love, is sometimes rendered into English by the word charity. This is not denied. It proves nothing, however, except that there was no term in Greek exactly corresponding to the word charity in English. The meaning of the Greek word is to be determined, like the meaning of almost every other word, not by assigning to it an arbitrary, undeviating signification, but by the connexion in which it stands; and this is no difficult thing. Such an attempt at induction might have amazed the schoolmen, and confounded Aquinas himself, but since the days of Locke and Reid the province of thought is too well understood, and the principles of language are too easily apprehended, to admit of difficulties in this process. It is a rule as old as Hilary, that the force of words depends on their sense, and not on their sound. *Verba non sono sed sensu sapiunt.* This rule is not to be deserted in the Scriptures.

Schleusner, whose accuracy and discrimination will not be called in question by any biblical scholar, has assigned no less than six distinct significations to the word of which we are now speaking. I will not enumerate these, but mention three only, which will be sufficient to show the incorrectness of your assertion.

First, it means the general principle of love, or "an invariable preference of Good," as this principle is defined by a late acute and philosophical writer.* This

* Cogan's Philosophical Treatise on the Passions, p. 25.

is the kind of love, which the Deity exercises towards his rational creatures, and which they are capable of exercising towards him. The word always implies this sense, when it is used to denote the love of God.

Secondly, it sometimes means alms-giving, or the conferring of benefits. St. Paul praises the Thessalonians for their *labour of love*, or their kind offices in relieving his wants and ministering to his comfort. He says to the Hebrews, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and *labour of love*, which ye have showed toward his name in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Here the apostle alludes to their kindness in contributing to the temporal necessities of the persons, who had laboured among them in the ministry. In both cases the word has the sense of charity, as we use the term to denote alms-giving.*

Thirdly, a meaning of the word, which is by far the most frequent in the New Testament, is that embracing the thoughts, feelings, and actions of men in their intercourse with one another. This is the charity, which the apostle says is greater than faith or hope, and which is so beautifully described in the thirteenth chapter of

* As most of the valuable Manuscripts, and all the ancient Greek commentators, omit the word *κοπος*, *labour*, in the text last quoted, Peirce, in accordance with Mill, thinks it was not written in the original. But, as he justly observes, the sense will not be altered by leaving it out. And he adds, "What the *love* was they showed, the apostle more fully declares, Heb. x. 33, 34. A very delicate way he takes here to commend the kindness they had shown him, by representing it to have been done out of respect for God himself." *Peirce in Loc.* For a parallel example of the bounty of the Philippians, see Phil. iv. 18.

The word, *αγαπην*, appears to be used in a similar sense, 1 Thess. v. 13. "Esteem them very highly *in love* for their work's sake." That is, take care to make proper returns for their labours by your deeds of bounty and charity; or, as Schleusner paraphrases it, *liberalitati in sustentandis et alendis doctoribus studete.*

the first epistle to the Corinthians. It is that virtue, which displays itself in active deeds of benevolence, gentleness, mercy; which teaches us humility, forbearance, and a just sense of the wants and the deserts of our fellowmen; and which, in short, preserves and regulates the order of society, by restraining the passions and bringing out the good qualities of our nature. It is a virtue arising entirely out of the condition of men, their mutual dependence, and the necessity of reciprocal benefits. If human nature were perfect, if we had neither faults nor wants, such a virtue could not exist.

That there is a broad and strongly marked distinction between the three meanings here noticed, is manifest on the slightest inspection. The same thing will be confirmed by comparing the properties of the virtue under each signification. No use of language will allow you to speak of the charity of God. The duties, which men owe to one another, or the duties of charity, have no relation, either to the character or the actions of the Supreme Being; nor have they any concern in our relations to him. We cannot be charitable to God, although we may and ought to love him. In giving alms, our charity may prompt us to relieve the distresses of a man, whose infamy and vices utterly forbid the exercise of love. We may comply with the commands of our Saviour, and have charity for our enemies in both of the two latter senses above mentioned, but we have not power to do so much violence to human nature as to love them in the first sense, while we know they are our enemies, and resolved to do us an injury when an opportunity shall offer.

But there is no occasion to dwell on this point. Nothing can be more clear than these distinctions, and I have only designed to show by a few hints with what

disregard of all critical precision you spoke, when you "asserted with confidence," that the word charity means precisely the same thing as the word love, and with what a fallacious and unscriptural principle you started, in laying down the rules of conduct, which should be followed by christians of different persuasions in regard to each other. Love is a principle, charity a virtue; love is an inclination to good, charity is active goodness; love is an involuntary emotion, charity a duty; love is an original affection, making a part of our nature, and communicated by the Deity himself, charity is a rule of moral action, founded on our condition in the world, and limited to our intercourse with men; love is a disposition of the mind, charity an act of the will, bringing this disposition to bear on particular objects; love can be excited only towards what is good, charity can never be extended to positive excellence, but is confined to the frailty, faults, wants, and sufferings of men. Do you say, after all, that charity is only a modification of love? Let this be admitted, and it will prove them not to be the same thing. Every virtue is a modification of this principle, yet every virtue is not love. All the moral attributes of the Deity are but so many modifications of his love, but will you say that his goodness, justice, mercy, wisdom are all synonymous with love, and consequently with each other? Piety, reverence, thanksgiving, and praise to our Maker, and also benevolence, tenderness, sympathy, generosity, compassion, lenity. are all modifications of this general principle; and it would be just as correct a use of language to say, that each of these virtues is equivalent to love, as it is to say the same of charity.

Your rule may be applied to all other words in the New Testament, as well as to the one which is translated love and charity. Take, for instance, the word,

which is usually rendered *righteousness*. In the original it means *justice*. There is, nevertheless, a very striking difference between these two words in our language. No man can be righteous without being just, but justice alone would be accounted a very small part of righteousness. The former implies nothing more, than rendering to every man his just due, while the latter embraces all the virtues of piety and morality, and is nearly the same as holiness. Your rule would require you to say, that as the word righteousness, "as used in Scripture," is equivalent to the word justice, nothing more is demanded of you to be a righteous man, than to be just, and that to pretend to any distinction here is one of the "popular crudities," which "ought to receive no countenance from any accurate thinker." By the same process, and without continuing your philology much farther, you might fall into the track of Horne Tooke, and convince yourself, that whatever is *commanded* is right and just, and thus discover the only reason, which perhaps has ever been given, why the commands, or in other words, the decisions, creeds, and decrees of councils, conventions, assemblies, and synods should be binding on the consciences and faith of christians.

Numerous examples of this sort might be recurred to, which would give additional proof of the error of your theory, and the mischievous tendency of its application.* On the whole, few things are more evident,

* The word, *πνευμα*, *spirit*, Schleusner calls *πολυσημος*, and assigns to it no less than *twenty six* distinct classes of significations, as it is used in the New Testament. Among others are life, breath, air, wind; the soul, the mind; a divine influence, the invisible and extraordinary gifts of the Deity. It would be as proper to say, that either of these is equivalent to the principal one, and that the word may always be understood in any one of these significations, as it is in your example of love and charity.

than that the notion under which you laboured to screen the rough features of your charges, receives as little support from the Scriptures, as from the understanding, the prevailing sentiments, and the best feelings of men. It is, moreover, fraught with many evils. If admitted in explaining the Scriptures, it would introduce utter confusion, and make the plainest things in the word of God ambiguous, and unintelligible. If carried into practice, it would have a most serious, and unhappy influence on the temper, morals, and character of christians. It virtually teaches, that all the moral qualities and exercises may be resolved into the general principle of love. For if charity means love, so does benevolence, and so do generosity, sympathy, tenderness, mercy; and the numerous duties, which these rules of virtue, and in fact, all rules of virtue, require, may be dispensed with, if you can satisfy yourself, that you have abundance of love. It is true, this happy simplicity in the great science of morals would relieve you from the grievance of thinking favourably of opinions, which do not in all respects accord with your own. It would leave no tax on your humility, your good nature, your love of truth, or desire for the progress of christian knowledge. There would be no occasion for these virtues, in dealing with our brethren, while the only thing requisite were a due caution not to resist the mechanical impulse of love. Unfortunately for this scheme, no such simplicity exists, either in the Scriptures, in the laws of human nature, or the sense of mankind.

I consider it established, therefore, that your views of this subject are erroneous, and that men have not been unwittingly duped into such a "crudity," as you imagine, in consenting to make it a christian duty to have some respect for the serious endeavours, the

anxious inquiries, and honest opinions of such, as have not been able to run in precisely the same path as themselves. In what I have further to say, it will be considered as settled, that there is such a virtue as charity, distinct from all other virtues, and that this is taught in the Scriptures. I have only to make a few remarks on the unreasonableness, danger, and evils of neglecting this virtue, and blotting it, as you have done, out of the catalogue of christian duties.

Charity has its origin, as we have seen, in the imperfections of men. It supposes defects and faults, not as implying crime, or designed offence, or wilful perversion of the gifts of heaven. The ignorance, prejudices, and errors of honest men, arise out of their weakness, and not out of a disposition to evil. No man errs in sincere opinion against his judgment, or sense of right. In practice he may err against these, and also against truth, conscience, reason. The errors of the honest man's opinions are innocent, but the errors of the wicked man's practice are criminal. By your principles these are confounded. This is preposterous. Wicked deeds claim neither charity, nor love, nor sufferance. Involuntary, innocent errors are identified with the imperfections of human nature, and every one's own frailty should convince him, that they demand the kind forbearance, or in other words, the charity, of the humble and the pious.

It may be added, that to withhold charity from such errors, is to inflict an injury, and be guilty of an offence. What more can you do to injure a person, whose faith you do not approve, than to charge people to beware of his discourse and his society, to take care how they read his books, charging him with heresy, declaring his morals to be infected by his principles, and pronouncing him unworthy of the christian name? In

such a case, you evidently make opinion a crime, and may thus fix a reproach in the fairest character, and scatter the seeds of malevolence in the religious affections of the unwary and the uninformed. Such insinuations and charges are worse than open slander, and public defamation, because they go abroad under the protecting garb of religion, and plead a zeal for God, even amidst their greatest enormities. They are fraught with mischief in every quarter. They testify the ill temper of the person by whom they are dispersed; they wantonly impugn the character of the virtuous and sincere; they deceive and corrupt the minds of the unsuspecting, and encourage the illiberal in their bitterness and unchristian revilings.

That the advocates for the kind of christian charity, which shows itself in effects like these, have always considered opinion a crime, has been thoroughly proved by the conduct of churches. Why else have they so often brought down the terrors of excommunication upon some of their members, whose lives were irreproachable, but whose spirit of inquiry, and honest avowal of their sentiments, have excited the suspicion, that they were penetrating too deeply into the dark subtleties, and secret corners of some of the received dogmas? Why the anathemas, which different churches have heaped with exhaustless bounty on others? In the midst of these imaginary works of sanctity and *love*, where is that charity, which "suffereth long and is kind, which doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but beareth all things, and endureth all things?" She has fled to her native skies, or is hidden in the depths of the earth; she is any where, rather than in the bosoms of her pretended votaries, inflaming their mistaken zeal, and approving their unholy purposes.

Without this charity, there can be no unity of consent, feeling, or action, either among christian sects or individuals. Differences exist in matters of opinion, and not of action. No sect, I believe, has ever made any peculiar or extraordinary acts of holiness the characteristics of its party. Hence, upon your scheme of loving the person, but "reprobating his principles," every sect must reprobate every other, for as sects they differ only in regard to "principles." This remark is not theoretical. It is verified by the example of every one, who betrays a fondness for denouncing any sect. The Rev. Dr. Brett, an Episcopalian, in a laboured discourse to establish your favourite notion of exclusive charity, thinks it a great hardship indeed, that he may not be permitted, in what he conceives to be the true spirit of christian moderation, to condemn Socinians and Quakers, and "those who refuse baptism to infants," and also to call such persons schismatics, as take it upon them to "renounce episcopal government, and condemn the orders and services of *our* church, setting up for themselves teachers according to their own fancies, and separating themselves from our communion, as the presbyterians and independents."* And I suppose you would think it an equal hardship, if you were denied the liberty of retorting upon episcopalians thus charitably inclined, and of clearing yourself from the imputation of schism, and maintaining that *their* church is no true church, but a defective branch of a corrupt stock, "setting up for itself teachers to its own fancies," and sadly deforming the primitive faith and discipline. This you would no doubt call moderation and charity, and you would only be following the example of Dr. Brett, and every other impugnor of a faith, which differs from his own.

* Sermon on True Moderation, as contained in the *Churchman armed against the Errors of the Times*, vol. iii. p. 12.

Trace this species of charity through its windings. To what does it come at last? It terminates in disaffections, divisions, wranglings, and all the desolating effects of the unholy passions. Let the application be more particular. No two men think alike. Opinions are as various as the objects of thought. The whole christian world is made up of persons, whose opinions are tinged with every shade, from the brilliant light of truth to the blackest darkness of error. What individual of the whole number can have the good fortune to be favoured with your charity? In accordance with your notion, the exercise of this virtue must be restricted to him alone, whose opinions are like your own. But where shall this person be found? At a certain point your charity will begin, but where is this point? In how many things must there be an agreement, and what are these things? Till this be fairly established, the conclusion of the whole matter is, you can have no charity for any man but yourself. This scheme implies an unavailing attempt to force nature. When you can make all the trees of the forest shoot forth leaves of the same texture, shape, and colour; when every blossom and every spire of grass shall exactly resemble every other; when every man's features, form, and dimensions shall be alike; and all minds shall have the same degree of wisdom, intelligence, and strength, then the fond dream of producing uniformity of opinion will be realized, and then, and not before, some straggling beams of your charity may go abroad, to look for other objects than yourself to act upon.*

Universal experience has also taught lessons, which it is impossible for us to forget. Persecutions,

* Some excellent reflections on this topic may be seen in the Rev. Dr. Channing's "Remarks on the Rev. Dr. Worcester's Second Letter to him on American Unitarianism." p. 24.

proscriptions, wars, murders, have been the bitter and detestable fruits of the insane zeal, which the spirit of uncharitableness, not as exercised towards the practices, but the opinions of men, has kindled and nourished in the breasts of the ignorant, the bigoted, the ambitious, the hypocritical, in every age of the christian church. Men have sanctified the most infamous purposes, by cloaking their crimes under the pretence of suppressing heresy, and protecting the faith. There is not a deeper blot in human nature, nor a more glaring outrage upon reason, nor a stronger verification of the maxim, *humanum est errare et insanire*, than the treatment, which christians have offered to one another, simply because they could not agree in opinion. By their cruelties, they have done as much as the power of man could do to exterminate one half of the world, and make hypocrites of the other. Do you suppose the number of heretics in France, and of Jews in Spain and Portugal, was diminished by the barbarous laws made against them, and by the bloody orgies of the Inquisition? No. Hypocrites were multiplied, every wicked passion was fanned into a flame, and the prayers of the sufferers ascended to heaven, mingled with imprecations of vengeance on their relentless persecutors.

All this was done, let it be remembered, without sacrificing a particle of that love, which you describe as the essence of charity, Nay, so far from it, that a love for the souls of men was frequently made the primary cause of the vilest persecutions. This was love without charity, and these were its genuine fruits. The topic of persecution is too trite to need enlargement. It is enough for you to cast upon it a single glance, and then recollect, that the principle which you would establish, and under which you would shelter your charges of heresy and immorality against unitarians, is the

same, which has ministered to the rage of fanaticism, the cupidity of avarice, the lust of unprincipled ambition, and the tortures of cruelty.

These hints are not introduced with the supposition, that such abuses are any longer to be apprehended, but only to show what have actually been the consequences where your principle has operated to its fullest extent. Opinions, and not actions, have invariably been the food of the consuming fire of persecution. A proper charity for such opinions, would have extinguished the devouring flame, spared the lives of the innocent, and raised the white banner of peace, instead of the bloody flag of death and desolation. The principle will for ever remain the same, and be equally opposed to the pure spirit of christianity. It may stop short of actual persecution, not for the want of a latent disposition, but of power, and the approbation of public sentiment.

The days of persecution it is to be hoped, and perhaps believed, have run their course. They have settled into the abyss of time, and will never again be drawn out to darken and disgrace the history of human nature. The hideous spirit of those days, whose poisonous breath infected all that was pure in the human heart, and blasted all that was fair and lovely in the christian scheme, is powerless, subdued by the majesty of truth, and the rising strength of unperverted reason. Heaven has smiled on the land, and the chimeras, which so long brooded in the imagination, and settled upon the soul, have gradually dissolved and disappeared. If some traces of them still remain, they are like the inscriptions on the mouldering monuments of antiquity, losing something of their distinctness and form with the return of every sun. The finger of time will at length erase them, and leave a fair surface, on which shall be written,

in characters that can never be defaced, the motto of all succeeding ages—truth and christian charity.

Again, your view of charity is at variance with the positive precepts of the Saviour. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” is an imperious command, and is enforced by the beautiful illustration, which immediately follows it, respecting the mote in a brother’s eye. Now this command could not relate to conduct. Every one has a right, and ought to judge the wicked deeds even of a brother. It relates to motives, intentions, and thoughts in forming opinions. These we are not at liberty to judge, or censure, for a very plain reason, because they are beyond our reach. And we encroach upon a prerogative, which God only can claim, when we set up a tribunal to take cognizance of the consciences of men. It is a fact, which ought to be impressed on the minds, and *engraven in the hearts* of all those worthy christians, who are fond of placing themselves in the judgment seat of such a tribunal, that Jesus neither condemned, censured, nor judged any man for his errors.

The severe denunciations, which he uttered against the Pharisees, were directed in no case against their opinions, but their hypocrisy, and wicked conduct. The heresies of the Saducees, and the miserable superstitions of the Pharisees, drew from him no expressions of reproach, nor kindled a spirit of exclusion. He worshipped in their synagogues, and associated freely and cordially with all good men. He never even rebuked his disciples for their errors of opinion, although some of them were of no favourable tendency. If he told them of the weakness of their faith, as he occasionally did, it was with a gentleness consistent with his knowledge of their sincerity, and a proper sense of their imperfection. He did not try their feelings, nor

abuse their integrity to themselves and their God, by dogmatical assertions, harsh epithets, and opprobrious names. He did not seek to alienate from them the affections of their brethren, nor to excite the suspicions of the indifferent, by proclaiming in the ears of the world their "dreadful, soul destroying errors;" or by calling them enemies of the gospel, who denied their Lord, and whom it was sinful to bid God speed; or by charging them with embracing a system, which was "most acceptable to the worldly minded and licentious," and by which they were "not in the smallest degree sanctified." No language of this choice texture can be found in the discourses of our divine Master. We are indebted for it to the amiable spirit of his followers in later times.*

Another evil consequence of your view of charity, is the discouragement of religious inquiry. Nor is this of small magnitude. Till we think it indifferent whether we have truth or falsehood, inquiry in religion is a duty of the highest obligation. Truth yields only to inquiry, and there can be no progress in truth, while the freedom of investigation is restrained. But the man, who thinks it a deed of charity to deprecate the faith of another man, and to impress the stigma of immorality on his character as a necessary accompaniment of his faith, must have so unshaken a conviction of his own infallibility, as not to suffer himself to examine one step beyond his present acquisitions. Let all men have the same confidence, self estimation, and charitable turn, and of course each

* A large portion of the sermon on the Mount is a comment on that kind of charity, which you call a "popular crudity." Jeremy Taylor's Eleventh Discourse in his *Life of Christ* is on *Charity*, as taught in this sermon. He considers it under three heads; *FORGIVING, GIVING, NOT JUDGING.*

one would think it a duty to adhere to his own faith, and deprecate the faith of all others. When charity to others requires us to judge their opinions, charity to ourselves would forbid any scrutiny into our own.

If you can get up the cry of heresy against a particular tenet, all, who regard your authority, and value your reputation, and do not profess to be well informed on the subject, will take care to support you, repeat your cry, and reiterate your alarms. To inquire afterwards would be to reproach themselves for their precipitancy and want of discernment. Hence, the man of charity not only shuts his own ears to all new counsel, and his understanding to all further wisdom, but throws the mantle of ignorance over as many as come within his reach.

On looking back to the view, which has been taken, it will be perceived, that so far from charity having nothing to do with opinions, it is really and properly confined to these alone. We ought not to be charitable to wicked deeds, and good ones do not need in their behalf the exercise of this virtue. Opinions are involuntary. It would be a crime for a man to pretend to believe contrary to his actual conviction; and whoever requires a particular faith, before he will let his charity appear, is in some degree accessory to such a crime.

It remains only to notice two or three texts of scripture, which you have quoted to fortify your sentiments and in justification of your charges. The first is that, which contains the denunciation of our Saviour against the Scribes and Pharisees. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"* In pronouncing this sentence, if the common notion of charity be correct, you observe, "our blessed

* Matthew xxiii. 23.

Saviour most grievously offended against this duty." Had you paid any regard to the whole chapter preceding, you could never have fallen into so great a mistake, as to quote this passage in your vindication. It has not the remotest bearing on the opinions of the Scribes and Pharisees, but is pointedly aimed at their conduct. It was uttered immediately after enumerating their vices, and charging them with hypocrisy, with making long prayers for a pretence, deceiving the unwary, neglecting judgment, mercy, and faith, and being guilty of extortion, excess, iniquity. In this connexion, the text is in no respect to your purpose, and might be spoken by any person against others, whose conduct resembled that of the Pharisees, without encroaching on the charity, for which I have been concluding.

You next bring to your aid the following passage. 'He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that receiveth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.'* Here again you have run into the same mistake as above. The apostle is not reproving errors, but vices. The men of whom he is speaking, he tells us were "deceivers." This shows them not to have been condemned for being led away by their erroneous opinions, but for attempting to impose on others, what they knew to be false. They taught false doctrines knowingly, and for selfish and wicked purposes. The apostle considered them *transgressors*, as is manifest from a clause, which, for some reason, you omitted in your quotation. 'Whosoever *transgresseth*, and abideth not in the

doctrine of Christ, hath not God." It is moreover intimated in positive terms, that their "*evil deeds*" were the objects of this reprobation. To teach what they knew was false, with the intention of leading people into wicked practices, was neither a mistake of judgment, nor error of opinion, but a deliberate crime. To such persons no laws of charity afford a refuge.*

You have at least the encouragement of not being solitary in your application of this passage. It is often in the mouths of the orthodox of the present day. They have acquired a habit, or set up a fashion of calling every thing heresy, which deviates from the train of thought into which their minds have chanced to run, and to such persons as cannot force themselves into this track, however sincere and honest, however virtuous and heavenly minded, they seem to regard it the highest test of their piety, and zeal for the cause of God, to deny the christian civilities; and they make all smooth and quiet with their consciences by shielding themselves under the example of St. John, who cautioned the christians of his time, or rather the "elect lady, and her children," to whom he wrote his second epistle, not to associate with deceivers, transgressors, and evil doers. Such is the

* Whitby says of the phrase, *Bid him not God speed*, that "it seems to be taken from the Jews, who were forbid to say *God speed* to a man that was excommunicated, or was *doing any evil action*." And in the present instance he adds, that it enjoins "a prohibition from doing any thing, which imports a consent to, or approbation of the evil actions" of one, to whom it may be applied. *Paraphrase on John 2, 11.*

Le Clerc remarks on the passage, that the persons alluded to were wicked men, who wished to be thought religious, but who rejected the authority of Christ and the apostles. No such, he continues, are found among christians of the present day, for they all revere the authority of the apostles, however they may depart from their doctrines. *Signantur mali homines, qui pii videri volebant, etc. Vid. Cleri. Adnotat. in Loc.*

power of orthodoxy to blind the eyes, cloud the understanding, narrow the mind, shut up the heart, and freeze the affections. Else why is this passage, and others like it, so often perverted to give countenance to the unchristian spirit, and unholy practices, which some, who profess to take their religion from the Bible, exhibit towards others, who are in no degree behind them in their earnest inquiries after truth, their humble and zealous efforts to obtain holiness of life, their confidence in the doctrines and promises of Christ, and their serious concern for their eternal welfare?

Your last quotation is from St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians. "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed."* This text was directed against a particular class of persons, who, the apostle observes in the same connexion, "would *pervert* the gospel of Christ." These persons, we learn from the whole epistle to the Galatians, were Judaizing christians, who were not simply betrayed into mistakes respecting the christian faith, but desired to impose the laws of Moses on all the converts, and to keep up the distinctions, which had always existed between the Jews and Gentiles. They knew this was contrary to the truth and spirit of christianity, because an inspired apostle had told them so, yet their pride and overbearing temper carried them forward in defiance of conscience and a better knowledge. In short, their wicked propensities, and obstinate disobedience of the plain, practical rules of the religion they professed, and not the errors of their belief, drew down upon them the severe censure in the ext. The apostle uses bold and confident language, and he gives a good reason. He was "taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ." When calvinists can prove

* Galatians i. 9.

the same in regard to themselves, it will become them to be equally confident, and I apprehend little hazard in predicting, that every unitarian will then humbly submit to their authority.

Such are the proofs you bring from scripture, that in the charges of heresy, and of immorality as the consequence of dangerous opinions, you were only acting "in conformity with the example, both of the Master, and his inspired servants." What I have said is enough to show how far this example bears you out. I cannot close, however, without expressing my astonishment at the position you assumed in resorting to this argument of defence. Is it possible, that you suppose yourself to have the same authority to judge and condemn the faith of others, as the Saviour and his Apostles? This must be taken for granted, otherwise you could not imagine that your appeal to their example would have any validity. This error runs through all your remarks. Positions are laid down as if they were dictated by some higher power. If you knew the hearts of men, like the Saviour, or were made acquainted with all divine truth, like the apostle Paul, such a thing would appear less strange. No knowledge short of this could qualify any one to follow their example in the instances, which you propose; and even then you would not have their example for judging the errors of men as crimes.

Unitarians consider charity an essential part of religion. They delight to think well of all men, who give the scripture test of a holy and blameless life. Articles of belief may exhibit themselves in an infinite variety of forms. They may deceive and mislead. Treachery may be concealed under fair pretences, falsehood may be entwined with the most solemn protestations, and deeds of the blackest die may lurk in the folds of a capacious faith. Holiness is single, always

the same, and always to be seen. Unitarians make this the criterion of a truly religious character. They are told, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," but they are not told, that they must suffer this penalty, unless they believe in a particular dogma, which they cannot understand, but which the fond partiality of some devotee may desire to impose on them.

While they pray to have their minds enlightened, and humbly submit to the guiding counsels of the Almighty, they feel secure in his kind protection, and do not fear, that he will make their humility and confidence the instruments of their ruin. They have charity for all christians, who show themselves sincere, and whose religion shines out in the brightness of a good life. Piety and virtue are with them the convincing test of a saving faith, and those articles of belief, which produce these in the highest degree, and to the greatest extent, will have the largest portion of their charity. Whoever thinks this an evidence of the defective faith, and the immorality of unitarians, must be left to enjoy his opinion.

I shall next come to the last division of your Reply, and consider the serious charges, which you bring against the faith and morals of some of the distinguished English unitarians.

Yours,

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

EIGHTH AND NINTH

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

**PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT
IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, AT PRINCETON.**

ON HIS

CHARGES AGAINST UNITARIANS.

[From the Unitarian Miscellany.]

Baltimore:

JOHN D. TOY, PRINTER,

Corner of Market street and St. Paul's lane.

1822.

EIGHTH LETTER

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

SIR,

In my first letter I incidentally mentioned the names of several persons, whose lives and characters, it was thought, afforded no feeble testimony to the incorrectness of your charges of immorality and irreligion against unitarians. I was so unfortunate, however, as to select a few names to which you have taken great exceptions. Among these you specify Clayton, Hoadly, Chillingworth, Law, Blackburne; and your principle of selection would embrace Dr. Samuel Clarke, and all others, who were unitarians, and at the same time belonged to the English Church. You are amazed, that any one should refer to such men as examples of morality. "I am astonished," you say, "and know not how men, whom I am compelled to consider as honest and sincere themselves, can so far suffer their zeal to triumph over their prudence, I had almost said over their moral sense, as to claim such associates." It is presumed, that all your readers, who know any thing of the characters of these persons, have been equally astonished, that your own "zeal should so far triumph over your prudence," as to suffer you to arraign before your individual

judgment, and condemn, with a latitude of censure amounting almost to reprobation, men, who have been universally admired for their talents, and revered for their virtues.

Since you have thus ventured, in terms the most serious, to impeach the characters of persons, who have always been considered not less an ornament to the christian profession, than worthy examples of the good influences of the unitarian faith, it becomes my duty to examine the *fact* in regard to their morals and lives, and also to inquire into the grounds of your impeachment. If, indeed, it can be made out, that these were bad men, and used religion only as a cloak for worldly and wicked purposes, as you would seem to insinuate, then it must be confessed, that the argument in favour of the moral tendency of unitarianism is rather weakened than confirmed by appealing to their example. But if the contrary be true, and they be ascertained to have been exemplary, and pious christians, it will follow, that you were mistaken, more vehement than accurate, and that the argument is sound.

As the only mode of settling the question in this shape, is by an appeal to their writings and cotemporaries, it can hardly be supposed, that my limited plan will allow me to go into a full investigation. I can only touch on a few prominent particulars. They shall be such, however, as will be conclusive. The truth is, you cannot select an equal number of men of so much eminence from any period of history, who were more distinguished for their excellence and christian virtues. Had you thrown your shafts at random, they could not have been more unfortunate in the direction they took, or the objects on which they chanced to fall. It is a fact, which you have not attempted to controvert, and

which I am persuaded you will not, that these men were remarkable for their practical goodness. Why then are they loaded with charges so heavy and offensive, why so much abhorrence expressed of their very names, why are they libelled and proscribed as men, who were a disgrace to their profession, who are to be reprobated and condemned as malefactors, and whom no honest man in defence of a good cause can "claim as associates?" You answer, that in belonging to the Church of England, they subscribed to articles which they did not believe. It follows, that they were hypocrites, and their goodness a show for their own convenience and interest. As the burden of your charges rests on this point, it shall be examined with some attention.

The question is, whether these men did not obey the dictates of conscience, and conform to the decision of their judgment in the course they pursued. If so, it would have been criminal to act differently. They are not to be judged by a rule, which any individual, not acquainted with their motives, may imagine he should prescribe to himself under similar circumstances. By this mode of judging, you would admit no man to be conscientious, or sincere, or to act rightly, till he should be guided by your rule. You have denounced these men as hypocrites, immoral, and irreligious, on principles by which every man in the community might, in a greater or less degree, come under the same censure. When you can prove by a man's conduct, that he aims to promote selfish interests and unholy purposes by a sacrifice of every thing, which can dignify and adorn the human character, or that he disregards all the laws of right reason and of revelation, which concern him as an immortal and accountable being, you may then, and not before, discover some show of justice in such a sen-

tence of condemnation, as you have passed upon these men. In the present case, no such proof can be exhibited. No motives can be urged, which could have induced them to dissemble. The whole tenor of their lives is a standing witness to their uprightness, and whatever may be thought of their views of subscription, it is contrary to every principle of justice and charity, of conviction and belief, to suppose that in a case of the greatest possible moment, they forsook the integrity, which had uniformly guided them in concerns of infinitely less importance.

It is well known, that very different opinions have been entertained by different persons, respecting the nature and terms of subscription. Some have contended, that the articles ought to be explicitly believed in their literal sense by the person subscribing, while others have considered them as designed to secure the peace and union of the Church, without intending to impose a belief, or a pretended belief, in particular dogmas. In the present connexion it will be sufficient to hint at three general modes, in which the subject has been viewed.

First, it was a very early opinion, that the articles were intended not so much to be articles of faith, as of peace. Such was the opinion of Laud, of Sheldon, and many others of that period. Some general forms were necessary to keep the Church together, and although the framers of the articles made them express their own belief, yet the object to be attained was a unity of action, an agreement of order, a resolution and promise to submit to the authority, and support the institutions of the Church.

This was the sense in which the subject was understood by Chillingworth. He publicly professed not to subscribe the articles, as articles of faith, but of peace.

To this effect he speaks in the following words; "For the Church of England I am fully persuaded, that the constant doctrine of it is so pure and orthodox, that whosoever believes it, and lives according to it, shall be saved; and that there is no error in it, which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturb the peace, or renounce the communion of it; *this, in my opinion, is all intended by subscription.*"* Here is no concealment, duplicity, nor dissembling. He tells you plainly and frankly, what he understands by subscribing; and whatever may have been his opinions in other respects, there is no room for doubting his honesty and integrity in this act.

He was first opposed to subscription from scruples of conscience, when a very advantageous preferment in the Church was offered to him; and the letter, which he wrote to Dr. Sheldon, declining this offer, because he could not assent to the articles in the sense, which he believed them to convey, affords one of the noblest testimonies of a powerful intellect, an excellent heart, an independent spirit, a lofty integrity, and great sacrifices for the sake of conscience, which have ever appeared. Speaking of subscription, he observes in this letter, "I thank God I am now so resolved, that I shall never do that while I am living and in health, which I would not do if I were dying; and this I am sure I would not do"† At this time he believed, that the articles should not be subscribed, unless they were believed in their most obvious sense. A long correspondence ensued, in which Sheldon, who was afterwards archbishop, argued,

* Preface to the Author of *Charity Maintained*, Sec. 40.

† This Letter may be seen at full length in Kippis' edition of the *Biog. Brit. Art. Chillingworth*; and also in the *Monthly Repository*, vol. ix. p. 8.

that the articles were meant to be "forms of peace." The reasoning of Sheldon, strengthened by that of archbishop Laud, who was the patron of Chillingworth, produced a change in his opinions. Without pretending to discuss the grounds of this change, I would simply inquire, with what semblance of justice, or candour, any one can accuse him of treachery to his conscience in this decision; any more than in the first, when the inducement was just as strong? In referring to this subject, the editors of the *Biographia Britannica* observe, "Whether Chillingworth's opinion upon this head were right, or wrong, there can be no doubt, from the whole tenour of his life, that he acted with perfect integrity."*

You say of him, that "he was a protestant and papist by turns, and at length died a socinian, soon after having solemnly denied that he was one." This is harsh in the extreme, and the more so, as it is incapable of being supported by a shadow of proof. The mind of Chillingworth was uncommonly inquisitive from his childhood, and his love of truth was equal to his desire of attaining knowledge. By his early intimacy with a learned Jesuit, he was induced to embrace the Catholic faith; but his mind was hardly matured, before he discovered his error, and became, during the remainder of his life, the most able, learned, and successful defender of protestantism, that has ever engaged in the cause. This, in your language, was being a papist and protestant by turns. It is not true, that he was ever a socinian. It was a slander reiterated by his enemies during his lifetime, but, like other slanders, was never substantiated. Had you ever read Chillingworth's admirable apology for his change of opinions, I must believe you would never have

* *Biog. Brit.* vol. iii, p. 518.

injured his memory by such ill founded and ungenerous insinuations as those above. No one can contemplate his remarks without admiring his frankness, his charitable temper, his humility, his zeal for truth; nor without feeling the utmost confidence in the purity of his intentions, the sincerity of his heart, and the piety of his soul.”*

The views of Clayton seem to have been nearly the same as those of Chillingworth. He was, if possible, more open in the avowal of his opinion, as appears from his eloquent speech before the Irish House of Lords, in which he defended a bill proposing alterations in the Book of Common Prayer. He argued and proved, that it was not the intention of the original act of uniformity, by which subscription was required, to enforce a belief in particular doctrines, but simply to demand an “unfeigned assent and consent to *the use of* all things in

* See Chillingworth’s *Religion of Protestants a safe Way to Salvation*. Chap. v. § 103.—chap. iv. § 16.—chap. vi. § 56.

Clarendon says of him, that “he was a man of excellent parts, and cheerful disposition; void of all kind of vice, and endued with many notable virtues; of a very public heart, and an indefatigable desire to do good.”

Some excellent remarks on the character and principles of Chillingworth, and the persecutions he received from his enemies, as well as strictures on the ravings of Cheynell respecting his last illness, death, and burial, may be seen in Hoadly’s *Letter to Dr. Snape, prefixed to Pillonniere’s Answer*. Works, vol. ii. p. 617, et seqq.

I take the liberty in this place to correct an error into which I have fallen in my third Letter. [Miscellany, Vol. i. p. 279.] The following sentiment is there referred to Locke, namely, “Let those, that in their words disclaim infallibility, disclaim it likewise in their actions.” This belongs to Chillingworth, by whom it is thus expressed. “Require of christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but him only. Let those leave claiming infallibility, that have no title to it; and let them that in their words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions.” *Religion of Protestants, &c.* chap. iv. § 16:

the said book." Such was the language of the Act, but in the form of declaration then in use, the words here marked with italics were omitted, thereby conveying a totally different sense, and perverting the original intention of the Act. "As there is," says Clayton in this speech, "a wide distance between being certain of the truth, and being certain of the falsehood of some propositions, it is no way inconsistent with the strictest honesty for persons to give their assent and consent, for peace and uniformity's sake, *to the use* of some particular forms of worship, either in doctrine or discipline, though they may not thoroughly approve of the things themselves, and to try to get them amended; while the public declaration of our assent and consent to the things themselves, ties down the mind from any further inquiry, and by discouraging all doubts and inquisitive industry, puts a stop to all improvement in knowledge, or any further reformation in religion." The same opinion he defended several years before, in a dedication to Dr. Stone, Primate of Ireland, which was prefixed to an Essay on Spirit.

Add to this, that Clayton was renowned through his whole life for his numerous virtues, for his amiable disposition, benevolence, disinterestedness, and indeed for all the characteristics of a pious and good man; that he was persecuted for his opinions, and suffered much from the reproaches and the ill treatment of the world,—add these things, and then ask yourself, what possible reason can be devised for supposing him to have been actuated by any other than conscientious, honest, and pure motives. He did not need, nor covet, the emoluments of the Church, for he possessed an ample fortune, and was known frequently to bestow more in offices of charity, than the whole amount of his ecclesiastical sti-

pend. Instead of a lavish bounty of censure, therefore, a true christian spirit would find much to commend and admire in the virtues of such a man.*

Secondly, the articles have been considered as requiring subscription in that sense, which the subscriber believes to be consistent with scripture. This opinion was adopted and defended by Dr. Samuel Clarke. It is in conformity with the protestant principle of taking the Scriptures as our only guide. No one can adhere to this principle in assenting to forms of human composition, unless he receives them in that sense only, which he believes the Scriptures to convey, and as affording such interpretations of the Scriptures, as are consistent with the meaning he attaches to them. Hence, whatever form of words any one may be called to subscribe, for religious purposes, he is bound to receive them in that sense, in which they can be made consistent expositions of scripture, and in no other. Dr. Clarke declares this to have been the principle by which he was guided,

* The following anecdote is illustrative of the character of Clayton. While on a visit to London, a person of respectable appearance called on him to ask charity. Suspecting imposition, he at first declined, but when the name of Dr. Clarke was incidentally mentioned by the person, Clayton told him, if he would obtain a certificate from Dr. Clarke, respecting the necessity of his circumstances, he would afford him aid. A certificate was produced, and without further inquiry, he gave him three hundred pounds, which sum was abundantly sufficient to relieve him from all his embarrassments.

Hearing of this noble act of benevolence, Dr. Clarke sought the acquaintance of Clayton, and introduced him to the Queen, who was so much delighted with the simplicity of his manners, the gentleness of his disposition, his benevolent and charitable spirit, that she immediately provided for his being appointed to the first vacant bishopric in Ireland. It hence appears, that the sole cause of his preferment was the excellence of his character, for it was long after this period, that he attained the celebrity to which he was raised by his learning and talents. Biog. Brit. vol. iii. p. 621.

in respect to the trinity. "I desire it may be observed," he says, "that my assent to the use of the forms by law appointed, and to all words of human institution, is given only *in that sense*, wherein they are, according to the explication given in the several parts of this book, (*Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*,) agreeable to that which appears to me, upon the most careful and serious consideration of the whole matter, to be the doctrine of scripture; and *not in that sense*, which the popish schoolmen, affecting, for the sake of *transubstantiation*, to make every thing look like a contradiction, endeavoured to introduce into the church."* Will you say, that Dr. Clarke was not sincere in this declaration, that he was seeking for a subterfuge, that he cherished self delusion, and aimed to deceive the world, that he rashly and foolishly hazarded the safety of his soul, by defying the vengeance of a holy and heart searching God? You must either sustain these positions, or allow his purposes to have been good, and his conduct innocent.†

It is the same with him, as in the examples of Chillingworth and Clayton. You have no other criterion of judging, than the character, which he sustained through life; and it may be doubted if history have recorded one more worthy, or unexceptionable. The strength of his religious affections, and the high and uniform tone of his morals, which his writings display, and which no one has attempted to disparage, are well expressed in the

* Introduction to the *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 33.

† Bishop Pearson seems to have had the same opinion as Dr. Clarke. Speaking of the Creed, he says, "I observe that whatsoever is delivered in the Creed, we *therefore* believe, *because* it is contained in the scriptures; and consequently must *so* believe it as it is contained there." *Exposition of the Creed*, 4th edit. p. 227.

following language of his biographer. "His piety was manly and unaffected, built upon the most solid grounds, and free from all pomp and show. The charity of his temper and good will was as extensive as the whole rational creation of God. The love of the religious and civil liberties of mankind was a ruling and powerful principle in his heart and practice. In a word, his morals, from the first of his days to the last, were without reproach. There was an innocence and inoffensiveness remarkable through his whole behaviour, and his life, when he came into the view of the great world, was an ornament and strength to that religion, which his pen so well defended."*

A third mode of considering the articles is, that they ought to be received according to the intention of the legislature, by which they were originally imposed. This view is supported by Paley.† He reasons, that it was not the original intention to make every man believe in each separate proposition, as such a thing is plainly impossible. The articles involve the most intricate subjects of metaphysical controversy, in which no two men were ever in all respects agreed. It was intended to exclude persons inclined to popery, anabaptists, puritans, and all others opposed to the episcopal establishment. Any person embraced within this list, Dr. Paley thinks ought not to subscribe at all; but any one not thus embraced may subscribe without

* Hoadly's *Life of Clarke*, Works, vol. iii. p. 468.

For a high eulogy on the virtues and piety of Dr. Clarke, see bishop Hare's Works, vol. ii. p. 23. Lond. 1746. It was a saying of the parishioners of Dr. Clarke,—“However we differ from him in some matters, we desire to see no other person in the pulpit.”

† Moral Philosophy, book iii. part 1, chap. 22.

giving credence to every article, provided he is convinced, that he complies strictly with the intention of the legislature.

Now I am very far from defending these modes of regarding the articles; nor does it come within my province to enter upon their merits. It is enough to bring into view the facts stated above to show, that the persons, whom you have censured with so much freedom, had reasons for their conduct, and such reasons as have been approved and acted upon by wise and good men of all parties. I do not assert the truth of their opinions, nor plead for their infallibility, but for their integrity, their conviction, and righteous motives. I infer these from the unimpeachable character of their lives, from their multiplied deeds of piety and goodness, and from their own declarations respecting their views of the nature and object of subscription. In screening them from your charges, I impose no tax on the indulgence of any person; I demand the exercise of common justice.

It is not important to investigate the particular motives of all the persons, whom your rule would include: Their precise opinions respecting subscription may not always be so accurately known, as in the examples above cited. But the argument holds good in all cases, that they ought to be considered honest in this particular, when they were known to be so in every thing else; and that whatever they thought of the mode, they were conscientious in the thing itself. If you deny this, you must deny, that character has any dependence on actions, and affirm, that men are to be accounted moral or immoral, according to the fancy or caprice of any one, who may choose to sit in judgment.

In regard to Hoadly, whoever doubts his integrity in any course he pursued, I would advise him to read his sermons on *Christian Moderation*, on *Judging one another*, and on *Persecution*. In these sermons may be seen the high principles of rectitude, of moral dignity, and of religious freedom, which influenced his opinions, and regulated his practice. In these may also be seen the deep responsibility under which he felt to his Maker, and the love and good will, which he cherished for all men. If a man's writings from the beginning to the end of a long life, are to be taken as any test of his principles and character, no one can be entitled to a fairer fame than Hoadly. He was an advocate, and a powerful advocate, for civil and religious liberty. His sermon before the king, on the *Kingdom of Christ*, which was the commencement of the famous Bangorian controversy, was wholly occupied in defending the great protestant principle of the right of private judgment, and perfect freedom of thought in religion. These were themes of which he was never weary. The purity of his morals was equal to his singleness of heart, and love of independence. Although he was attacked with much violence from every quarter, and compelled to make many replies, and meet many heavy charges, it was said of him at the time, and it is not likely to be controverted at the present day, that "the enemies of religious liberty had not been able to fix any disgrace on the unspotted character of the most excellent bishop."*

The case of Blackburne is more in point, than any I have noticed. He refused preferment, because he

* See *An Account of the Bangorian Controversy*, drawn up by a person thoroughly acquainted with the subject, and with the character of Hoadly, and printed in the later editions of Hoadly's Works.

would not again subscribe. He was intimate with Lindsey, Disney, and others of the unitarian belief, and when Dr. Chandler died, the congregation at the old Jewry, in London, knowing Blackburne's views concerning the established Church, took pains to ascertain whether, if chosen, he would become their pastor. He declined, notwithstanding his income would be three times as large as the one he then received. "His continuance in the church," says Dr. Rees, "cannot be justly ascribed to any selfish and interested motives, because he might have left it with advantage, and he remained in it with a fixed purpose of accepting no preferment; and he refused very considerable offers of this kind." In his very able and admirable work, *The Confessional*, he opposes the notion in all its shapes, that the articles could properly be subscribed without believing them in their literal acceptance.* After having subscribed, he remained in the Church, but refused advancement on the condition of further subscription, and declined the most liberal offers out of the Church, which he might have accepted without subscribing. How is this conduct to be explained by your principles of hypocrisy and selfishness? How is it to be explained in any way, except by supposing the man to have yielded to a rigid sense of duty, and to have sacrificed the prospects of worldly gain and preferment to his religious scruples, and peace of conscience?

Such are the men, whom you charge with the grossest immorality, and of whom you say, in a late work, if they were unitarians, "they have lived in habits of the most shameful dishonesty and perjury; a dishonesty and

* See *Confessional*, second edit. p. 202. Also, Ridley's *Three Letters to the Author of the Confessional*. Letter Third.

perjury, which, if known, could not fail of rendering them, in the eyes of all upright men, a disgrace to any society calling itself a church of Christ."* Without stopping to descant on the delicacy of phrase, and mildness of spirit, with which this passage is marked, I would simply repeat, what I have before suggested, that, putting religious considerations out of the question, common justice demands something like an examination, before a final and irrevocable sentence is passed. Even the inquisition had its judgment halls, and so much respect was paid to public sentiment, however debased and perverted, as to go through the forms of investigation. You have discovered a shorter method, and set up a tribunal, at which all these things are dispensed with in a most summary way, and the first step in the process is, to inflict the sentence of condemnation. I know not that any friend of truth has reason to lament the introduction of this new system, as in its operation it must effectually defeat itself. Rashness and violence are seldom accounted an indication of the justice of a cause; and a fondness for censure betrays more of a soured temper and depraved heart, than of christian love, kindness, and forbearance.

I am not disposed to assume for these men the same merit for independence, as I would for Robertson, Lindsey, Disney, Jebb, and others, who left the Church. Nor do I think this necessary to vindicate their characters from such allegations, as you have made. No one has any reason to question their motives. They were virtuous and pious men. Some of them remained in the Church against their interest, and frankly declared to the world in what light they regarded subscription.

* Letters on Unitarianism, p. 108.

From these premises, which are thoroughly established, I maintain the inference to be legitimate and conclusive, that they were honest and sincere. Robertson and Lindsey continued several years in the Church after they became unitarians, and this, as they tell you, with a clear conscience, and under a sense of duty. No one, I apprehend, will have the hardihood to accuse them of "dishonesty and perjury," or of prevaricating and dissembling. There is a christian virtue, called charity, which, as practised by the Saviour and the primitive christians, should teach us to think favourably of our brethren.

Trace your principle farther. It operates with just as much rigour on other persons belonging to the Church, as on unitarians. In truth, it reaches to every individual, who subscribes the articles. Do you believe any person to have subscribed, who gave credence literally to every proposition in every article? Does not each one modify many parts in accordance with what he conceives to be the meaning of scripture? And among episcopalians, are there not all shades and gradations of theological opinions? This is not to be denied. But do you suppose the articles *literally* teach all religious opinions? Do they teach Arminianism to some, and Calvinism to others? Did they teach Jeremy Taylor to write against original sin and predestination, which are two of the most conspicuous doctrines of the articles? Did they teach the bishop of Lincoln to defend the doctrine of universal redemption, and Scott, and his Calvinistic brethren, to restrict the possibility of salvation to the elect? Did they teach Wallis and South to find only a trinity of modes in the Deity, and Sherlock to discover, that the Divinity consists of three beings, as distinct as three men? When all these ques-

tions can be answered in the affirmative; that is, when innumerable contradictions can be reconciled, it may then be proved, that all others besides unitarians have concurred in receiving the articles in their literal sense. It may then be proved, also, and not before, that unitarians, belonging to the Church, have been more dishonest than other episcopalians, and that all, indiscriminately, who have subscribed the articles, were guilty of "dishonesty and perjury."

Once more. Let the principle be carried into your own church. When a candidate is licensed to preach, he is required, by the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, to answer the following question in the affirmative. "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy Scriptures?"* This declaration, so far as faith is concerned, amounts to precisely the same thing as subscription in the Episcopal Church. It binds the candidate to receive the Confession of Faith as the rule of his opinions. Now this formulary is in the highest tone of Calvinism. What shall we say, when we find Presbyterians, who have solemnly made this declaration, afterwards denying their belief of several articles in the Confession of Faith? Is it not a fact, that more than one fifth of the Presbyterian General Assembly are Hopkinsians? Is it not true, that some of them, I will not undertake to say how many, are inclining to Arminianism? Is it not true, that some, who call themselves the "stricter sort," say as little as possible of that vital doctrine of Calvinism, denominated, in the Confession of Faith, "God's Eternal Decree?" How are these things to be recon-

* Form of Government in the Presbyterian Church. Chap. xii. Section 5.

ciled? Shall we cut the matter short, and deplore such lamentable instances of "dishonesty and perjury?" No. Let us put on the garments of humility and of charity; let each one remove the beam from his own eye, and study the imperfection of his own heart. Let him first scrutinize and judge himself. He will then be better prepared to enumerate the faults, reprobate the motives, and disparage the character of his brethren. Nay, rather, it is hoped he will be better prepared for aiding the progress of christian truth, and for establishing the Redeemer's kingdom, the kingdom of piety and goodness, in the hearts and lives of men.

In my next I shall inquire into the theological opinions of Newton, Locke, and Watts.

Yours,

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

NINTH LETTER,

TO THE

REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

SIR,

In the closing remarks of your Letter, strong disapprobation is expressed, that unitarians should presume to rank Newton, Locke and Watts, among their numbers. You intimate a belief, that in using this freedom with the two former, "those illustrious men are treated, with great injustice;" and "against placing the pious, the heavenly-minded Watts in such company, you feel constrained to enter your solemn protest." As I had enumerated these men among others, who were not believers in the trinity, and as you have been so prompt to question the accuracy, and even the justice of this enumeration, I propose to devote a few words to a consideration of this topic.

It may be premised, that unitarians do not recur to great names as affording any proof of the truth of their opinions. Error is not confined to the ignorant and unwise, nor is infallibility the prerogative of greatness. In religion we look for *proof* nowhere but in the Scriptures. The authority of great names ought, doubtless, to have its weight, not in convincing us in opposition to the word of God, but in confirming us in the conclusions to which we have come by a careful inquiry. Jus-

tice to ourselves, as well as to the cause we support, compels us to recur often to the names of distinguished unitarians. It is among the delights of our adversaries to impress it on the public mind, that our insignificance must necessarily prove us heretics; that our opinions are too novel to be true; and that the voice of all the learned, and wise, and good, speaks loudly against us. This string is harped upon incessantly. No matter how false and discordant its notes, so long as their tone is sufficiently high, and they produce the desired effect on the multitude. Prejudices grow out of these errors. We desire to lessen the evil by removing the cause. We wish our brethren to be enlightened, to know the truth, and to have as few occasions as possible for uncharitableness and reproach. We are influenced by a double motive, therefore, in referring to distinguished names; first, the natural desire of showing that our faith has been embraced and supported by wise and excellent men; and secondly, the hope of softening the roughness, and tempering the violence of those, who indulge in a license of obloquy and disparagement, which, we are willing to believe, is more the result of ignorance, than of a wicked disposition.

Let it be further observed, that in the cases of Newton and Locke, the labour of proof belongs to trinitarians. These men have always been classed with unitarians; they have been perpetually quoted on that side of the question, nor have I ever heard of their authority being brought forward in favour of the trinity, or even of orthodoxy. Prove from their writings, or from the writings of their cotemporaries, or from any well established facts, that they were trinitarians, and the point will be settled. The persons, who manifest so lively a concern for what they profess to deem the in-

jured reputation of these great men, have exhibited no proof to this effect. Until this be done, Newton and Locke must be considered unitarians, as they always have been. I am not disposed, however, to decline an investigation of some of the positive evidences of the fact. The inquiry must necessarily be confined to a narrow space.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first, who formally engaged in proving the spuriousness of the famous text of the three heavenly witnesses, 1 John v. 7; and also in showing that the received reading of 1 Tim. iii. 16, is a corruption.* This subject was discussed in two letters said to have been written to Le Clerc. The language and arguments are precisely such, as would be used by unitarians, and such as trinitarians of that day, before the controversy touching those passages had been much agitated, could not be supposed to have employed. In advertent to the testimony of Cyprian, Newton observes, that "he does not say the Father, the *Word*, and the Holy Ghost, as in 1 John, v. 7, but the Father, the *Son*, and the Holy Ghost, as it is in Baptism, *the place from which they at first TRIED to derive the trinity.*"† Do you believe this language ever escaped from a trinitarian? Instead

* In regard to 1 Tim. iii. 16, Newton was of the same opinion as Dr. Samuel Clarke. Instead of *God manifest in the flesh*, he believed the true reading to be, *He who, or that which was manifest in the flesh*. "All the old versions," says Dr. Clarke, "have it *qui* or *quod*. And all the ancient Fathers, though the copies of many of them have it now in the text itself, *ὁ Θεός*, *Deus*, yet from the tenour of their comments upon it, and from their never citing it in the Arian controversy, it appears they always read it *qui* or *quod*." *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 88. Third Edit.* Mills says, this text was never quoted as proof of Christ's divinity, till the year 380, and then first by Gregory Nyssen.—Gregorius Nyssenus primus omnium, &c.

† See Newton's Works, Horsley's Edition, vol. v. p. 488; or the Two Letters in a separate form, as they were printed in 1754.

of indicating any confidence in the doctrine of the trinity, does it not strongly imply that the advocates of this doctrine have TRIED in vain to find it in a text, to which they have universally resorted as a strong hold? The person, who can read these Letters with an unshaken conviction, that the author was not an antitrinitarian, must have a rule of deciding the meaning of a writer from his language, which few will apprehend.

In referring again to the text in John, Newton says, "Let them make good sense of it who are able. If it be said, that we are not to determine what is scripture, and what not, by our own private judgments, I confess it in places not controverted. *But in disputable points, I love to take up with what I can best understand. It is the temper of the hot and superstitious part of mankind, in matters of religion, to be fond of mysteries; and, for that reason, to like best what they understand least.* Such men use the apostle John as they please; but I have that honour for him, as to believe, that he wrote good sense, and, therefore, take that sense to be his, which is the best, especially since I am defended in it by so great authority." It is readily admitted, that these words *might* be spoken by a trinitarian. It must nevertheless be granted, that it is a kind of language, which no one of that faith has been known to use. The sentiments it inculcates are peculiar to unitarians, and are continually attacked by their opponents with almost as much harshness, as their views of the trinity itself. The trinity is a mystery, and if that doctrine is to have the preference, which we "can best understand," who will ever be a trinitarian?*

* In Newton's remarks on the Book of Revelations, he speaks as follows; "As the few and obscure prophecies concerning Christ's first coming were for the setting up of the christian religion, *which*

When Sir Isaac Newton was Master of the Mint, the office of Assay Master was filled by Mr. Hopton Haynes. This gentleman was a unitarian, and wrote with much ability and learning a treatise on the subject, which has recently been several times republished.* Mr. Haynes, who was long and intimately acquainted with Newton, declared to a friend,† that “he did not believe our Lord’s pre-existence, being a socinian, as we call it, in that article; and that Sir Isaac much lamented Dr. Clarke’s embracing Arianism, which opinion he feared had been, and still would be, if maintained by learned men, a great obstruction to the progress of christianity.”‡ This declaration is alone amply sufficient. It was made by a man who could not possibly mistake. I am aware of Magee’s insinuations, that Haynes and Baron were *unitarians*, and therefore not to be trusted; but I am also aware of many other insinuations of his not less gross or illiberal. When unitarianism is concerned no man is more fruitful in sneers and low ridicule, none more barren in argument and fact. In the present instance, as in many others, his poisoned arrows rebound upon himself. As he has substituted sneers for reasons, it is

ALL NATIONS *have since corrupted*; so the many and clear prophecies concerning the things to be done at Christ’s second coming, are not only for predicting, but also for *effecting a recovery of the long-lost truth*.” What is the corruption here spoken of, and what is the long-lost truth? Read Priestley’s History of Early Opinions, and of the Corruptions of Christianity, and you will discover the sentiments of unitarians on the subject, which I have no doubt were the sentiments of Newton.

* This work is called a *Scripture Account of the Attributes and Worship of God, and of the Character and Offices of Jesus Christ*.

† The Rev. Richard Baron, “a person of great probity and public spirit, and known by many valuable publications.”

‡ See the Preface to the 2d edition of Haynes’s *Scripture Account* p. vii.

plain enough that no reasons were at hand. An impartial and unbiassed writer has said of Haynes, in speaking of his general character, without allusion to his theological opinions, "that he always behaved himself highly worthy of the great trust reposed in him, being indefatigable and most faithful in the execution of his offices;" and adds, "We may conclude, from his being in the Mint, at the time Sir Isaac Newton presided there, and from his known piety and love of learned conversation, that he had frequent intercourse and enjoyed the good opinion of that excellent man."* The probability, that an intimacy and a similarity of opinion existed between them is also strengthened by the fact mentioned in Wetstein's *Prolegomena*, that Haynes translated the Two Letters above mentioned into Latin.

There is yet another argument directly in point, and in my mind an unanswerable one. It is well known, that Newton left several papers on theological subjects, which have never been permitted to come before the world. They were cautiously excluded from Horsley's large edition of his works. These papers have been said to contain more at large the author's views of the unitarian system. Nor has this report been contradicted by the persons who hold the papers in their possession. It was not contradicted by Horsley, who examined the papers, and declared them unsuitable for publication. What could Horsley find in any theological writings of Sir Isaac Newton, which he deemed proper to keep in the dark? This question has been answered in conformity with the common sense of mankind, by a writer, who cannot be supposed to have spoken from interested mo-

* Nichols' *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. ii, p. 140, 141, as cited by Dr. Carpenter, and in Mr. Aspland's Preface to the 4th edition of the *Scripture Account*.

tives. "Newton's religious opinions were not orthodox. For example, he did not believe in the trinity. This gives us the reason why Horsley, the champion of the trinity, found Newton's papers unfit for publication. But it is much to be regretted, that they have never seen the light."*

I will only add, that Dr. Chalmers has confessed his belief in the unitarian sentiments of Newton—awkwardly enough, to be sure, but still it is a confession—and this, after making him not only the greatest and wisest philosopher, but the acutest and profoundest theologian, whom the world has seen.†

Concerning the opinions of Locke I have but little to say. The main point in question is sufficiently settled by a single fact, which is, that public sentiment has invariably ranked him among unitarians, and no one has succeeded in proving this sentiment erroneous. I know what Magee and Bishop Burgess have *attempted* to do, and I also know what they have totally failed to accomplish. They were willing to believe, like yourself, that Locke was "treated with great injustice," by having unitarianism imputed to him, and they generously undertook the labour of freeing him from this imputation. They read his works, and no doubt with all the fidelity and zeal, which their concern for his reputation demanded. They made quotations, but to what did they amount? To nothing indeed, which advances

* Thompson's History of the Royal Society, p. 283.—Annals of Philosophy, vol. ii, p. 322; as quoted by Marsden.

† Compare the Preface to Dr. Chalmers' Astronomical Discourses with the second sermon in the course. See likewise Unitarian Miscellany, vol. i. p. 167.

For further information respecting the sentiments of Newton, consult Marsden's Letter to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers; and Carpenter's Examination of Magee's Charges against Unitarians and Unitarianism.

their purpose. They have not been able to discover a fact, hint, or allusion, which warrants the inference, that Locke believed in a trinity. In relation to this doctrine, they have not quoted a syllable to which unitarians generally will not assent. Is not the conclusion from these particulars directly the contrary of that, which Magee and Burgess would establish. And if they have failed, who will undertake the task?*

Locke has written largely upon the christian religion. The primary object of his *Reasonableness of Christianity* was to ascertain the kind of faith necessary to make a man a christian. But in the course of this investigation he exhibits, with some degree of minuteness, his views of the christian dispensation. In his two *Vindications* he expresses his thoughts more at length, and dwells particularly on what his opponents called fundamentals, and charged him with omitting. This list of fundamentals is in close resemblance to the one you have drawn up, as containing articles essential to the faith of any person, who would be entitled to the name of christian. Locke denied, that any such articles were necessary, and maintained what he had asserted and proved in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, that one essential article of faith only was preached by the Saviour and his apostles, namely, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Whoever professed this faith was considered a member of Christ's church.

* Prebendary Dennis gravely cited a work called, *Locke's Common place Book to the Bible*, as a proof that he was a trinitarian. Others, perhaps, may have been influenced by the same authority. This book was first published in 1763. It was afterwards enlarged, and by a species of pious imposition was sent out under the name of Mr. Locke. Notwithstanding it has always been known to be spurious, it is still published as Locke's, with a preface ascribed to him, which, as Bishop Law has said, "is neither sense nor English."

Locke has also left an elaborate paraphrase and commentary on four of St. Paul's Epistles. In all these writings nothing appears, which shows the author to have had any leaning towards the doctrine of the trinity, or any other of the doctrines of high orthodoxy. Does not this amount to a demonstration, that he believed in none of these things? Was it ever known, that a trinitarian has written expressly on the fundamental articles, without in any shape embracing the distinguishing doctrine of his faith? It is presumed not. Consult Locke's interpretation of those texts in the Epistles usually quoted in support of the trinity. In no case will you discover any tendency to this doctrine.*

The facts here stated are conclusive. They constitute an argument, which can be overthrown only by positive evidence, that Locke was a trinitarian. Let this be produced, and the controversy will be at an end.

I have room for no more than two or three quotations from Locke's works. It will appear from these, however, that the *principles*, by which he was guided in explaining the religion of the Saviour, and interpreting the word of God, are in all respects the same as those of unitarians.

In the first place, he believed the truths revealed by Jesus to be adapted to the understanding; that all men, the simple as well as the wise, "are concerned in this re-

* Examine particularly the famous text of Rom. ix. 5, which trinitarians consider so strong in their favour. Locke's paraphrase gives it a meaning wholly irrelevant to their purpose. Instead of the rendering of the common version, which reads as follows, "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever," Locke renders it, "Christ is come, he who is over all, God be blessed for ever."

ligion, and ought to *understand it*, in order to their salvation " For thus declaring religion to be an intelligible thing, he drew upon him the censure and sneers of his adversary. In reply, he said, "I hope it is no derogation to the christian religion to say, that the fundamentals of it, that is, all that is necessary to be believed in it, by all men, is easy to be understood by all men. This I thought myself authorized to say, by the very easy and very intelligible articles insisted on by our Saviour and his apostles; which contain nothing but what could be understood by the bulk of mankind."* Now I would ask, whether the trinity be a "very easy and a very intelligible article," and whether it "contains nothing which may not be understood by the bulk of mankind?" I would also ask, whether the principles here assumed by Locke be not at variance with those universally received and acted upon by trinitarians†

Furthermore, do not all believers in the trinity consider this doctrine of the highest importance, and a necessary article of faith? Do they not all contend, that it

* *Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*; Locke's Works, eleventh edition, Vol. vii. p. 176. See also Locke's views of this subject in the chapter on *Faith and Reason*, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, Book iv. c. 18.

† In the year 1781, a book was published in England by a Mr. Milner, deploring the calamities, which were about to come upon the world, by introducing human reason into religion. Mr. Locke is made the great offender, and in alluding to him, the writer utters the following lamentations. "Reason has impertinently meddled with the gospel, and that with such overbearing credulity, as to darken it more and more; and rivers of tears would not suffice to bewail the increase of moral misery, which, since Mr. Locke's time, has pervaded these kingdoms." And again; "it was Mr. Locke, who first, unhappily, gave reason leave to intrude herself into the secrets of christianity."

was preached by the Saviour and his apostles? But Locke virtually denied both of these propositions. He asserted, that Jesus and the apostles preached only one article as essential, which was the Messiahship of Jesus. Hear what he says in reply to his opponents, who charged him with being a socinian, because he omitted the trinity and its collateral doctrines. "Did he amiss," he asks, alluding to himself, "that he offered to the belief of those, who stood off, that and only that, which our Saviour and his apostles preached. for the reducing the unconverted world; and would any one think he in earnest went about to persuade men to be christians, who should use that as an argument to recommend the gospel, which he has observed men to lay hold on, as an objection against it? To urge such points of controversy, as necessary articles of faith, when we see *our Saviour and the apostles, in their preaching, urged them not as necessary to be believed to make men christians*, is, by our own authority, to add prejudices to prejudices. and to block our own way to those men, whom we would have access to, and prevail upon."* Can any thing be plainer than this passage? He tells you, that he had not enforced the doctrines, for the omission of which he was charged with the heresy of socinianism, because, "our Saviour and the apostles urged them not as necessary to be believed, to make men christians." The trinity was one of these doctrines. What is the inference, if it be not, that Locke did not believe the trinity to have been preached by the Saviour and the apostles?†

* *Vindication, &c.* Works, vol. vii. p. 164.

† I cannot forbear quoting in this place, a passage from Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, which presents in clear terms the substance of his views respecting essential articles of faith. He

Some persons seem to have deceived themselves in regard to Locke's opinions, by not giving a proper attention to the object of his reasonings, especially in his two *Vindications*. When the *Reasonableness of Christianity* appeared, it was furiously attacked by Edwards, in a treatise called *Socinianism Unmasked*, and charged not only with inculcating socinianism, but even the desolating tenets of deism and atheism. The *Vindications* were written in reply to Edwards, and conducted in a masterly train of logical reasonings, aiming at one point only, which was to disprove the charge of a tendency to the peculiar tenets of socinianism, and to irreligion in the *Reasonableness of Christianity*. In doing this, Locke had no occasion to bring forward and explain his own opinions, or all the topics embraced in the controversy. It was his sole object to show the disingenuousness of his adversary in making charges, and

states, "that above threescore years after our Saviour's passion, St. John knew nothing else required to be believed for the attaining of life, but that 'Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,'" and then goes on to add the following words;

"To this it is likely it will be objected by some, that to believe only that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, is but an historical, and not a justifying, or saving faith.

"To which I answer, that I allow to the makers of systems and their followers, to invent and use what distinctions they please, and to call things by what names they think fit. But I cannot allow to them, or to any man, an authority to make a religion for me, or to alter that which God hath revealed. And if they please to cail the believing that, which our Saviour and his apostles preached, and proposed alone to be believed, an historical faith, they have their liberty; but they must have a care, how they deny it to be a justifying or saving faith, when our Saviour and his apostles have declared it so to be, and taught no other, which men should receive, and whereby they should be made believers unto eternal life; unless they can so far make bold with our Saviour, for the sake of their beloved systems, as to say, that he forgot what he came into the world for, and that he

drawing inferences, totally unwarranted by any thing in the work, which he was pretending to examine. It was no part of his purpose, to make known the tenets of his faith, but to show that the objections made against his book, on account of its supposed irreligious tendency, were ill natured and unfounded.

Bishop Stillingfleet had the acuteness to discover, as he imagined, a secret attack on the trinity, even in the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. Locke, in his reply, does not say that he believes in the trinity, and that therefore the bishop's insinuations are false, but goes on to repel the charges, by showing that the book has nothing to do with the trinity, and is gratuitously dragged into the controversy. These facts explain the reason why Locke was less explicit on many topics, than would

and his apostles did not instruct people right in the way and mysteries of salvation.

"For that this is the sole doctrine pressed and required to be believed in the whole tenour of our Saviour's and his apostles' preaching, we have showed through the whole history of the Evangelists and the Acts. And I challenge them to show, that there was any other doctrine, upon their assent in which, men were pronounced believers or unbelievers, and accordingly received into the church of Christ, as members of his body, as far as mere believing could make them so; or else kept out of it. This was the only gospel article of faith, which was preached to them. And if nothing else was preached every where, the apostle's argument will hold against any other articles of faith to be believed under the gospel. 'How shall they believe that whereof they have not heard?' Rom. x. 14. For to preach any other doctrines necessary to be believed, we do not find that any body was sent." *Reasonableness of Christianity*; Works, vol. vii. p. 102.

It is not necessary to ask whether this is the language of trinitarians. See more in Locke's letter to Limboreh on the unity of God Works, vol. x. p. 71.

be expected, if he were explaining and defending his own tenets.*

According to bishop Law, there is much reason for supposing Locke to have been a contributor to the *Unitarian Tracts*, published in England, near the close of the seventeenth century † It is not easy, perhaps, to ascertain his precise opinions respecting the nature of Christ. Like the old socinians, and the generality of unitarians of the present day, he believed in the miraculous conception; but it will be a difficult thing to prove, that he believed in the simple humanity, or the worship of Christ, which were also two of the leading tenets of socinianism. Lardner considered him an Arian, and ranked him with Dr. John Taylor, as may be seen in his

* The following extract from Locke's *Second Reply to the Bishop of Worcester*, will give us no very indistinct notion of his views of the trinity.

"I presume your lordship, in your discourse in vindication of the doctrine of the trinity, intends to give it us as it has been received in the christian church. And I think your words, viz; 'it is the sense of the christian church, which you are bound to defend, and the particular opinions of your own,' authorise one to think so. But if I am to own it, as your lordship has there delivered it, I must own that I do not understand; for I confess your exposition of the sense of the church wholly transcends my capacity.

"If you require me to own it with an implicit faith, I shall pay that deference as soon to your lordship's exposition of the doctrine of the church, as any one's. But if I must understand and know what I own, it is my misfortune, and I cannot deny, that I am far from owning what you in that discourse deliver, as I can be far from expressing the most unintelligible thing that ever I read, to be the doctrine I own. Whether I make more use of my poor understanding in the case, than you are willing to allow every one of your readers, I cannot tell; but such an understanding as God has given me, is the best I have, and that which I must use in the apprehending what others say, before I can own the truth of it; and for this there is no help that I know." *Works*, vol. iv. p. 198.

† Preface to Locke's *Works*, p. vii.

Letters on the Logos.* And, indeed, many of Locke's interpretations, contained in the Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles, seem to be founded on the Arian hypothesis. This is particularly true of the passage referred to by Lardner, where Locke speaks of the spiritual part of Christ being derived from God "by a divine extraction," which plainly shows, that in his highest nature, he considered him a derived being, and consequently subordinate to the Deity.* But this discussion is of little importance in the present connexion. It is enough, that Locke has always been accounted a unitarian, that his writings confirm this sentiment, and that no adequate evidence has been offered to the contrary.

We come next to the opinions of Watts, whom you seem peculiarly solicitous to rescue from the hands of unitarians. As the reasons you present for believing him to have "lived and died a trinitarian," are for the most part irrelevant to the purpose, it will be needless to examine them in detail. They may all be summed up in this one position; that, as he was once a trinitarian, he must always have been such. You have proved, beyond contradiction, what no one has ever denied, or doubted; namely, that Watts at one period of his life was zealous in the trinitarian faith, and wrote much in its favour. On this point there is no disagreement. But here you stop short. The only important thing in the argument is left untouched. It is believed, that

* Lardner's Works, vol. xi. p. 116.

† See Locke's paraphrase and note on Romans i. 4. The note is as follows. " 'According to the spirit of holiness,' is here manifestly opposed to, 'according to the flesh,' in the foregoing verse, and so must mean that more pure and spiritual part in him, which, by *divine extraction*, he had immediately from God."

Watts changed his opinions during his lifetime, and at length went over to the unitarian faith. The reasons for this belief you have not disproved, nor even approached. All you have said, therefore, may be taken for granted, except your inferences; and with this concession, I will proceed, in few words, to state some of the facts, which confirm the unitarianism of Dr. Watts.*

A letter is extant, which was written by the Rev. Samuel Merivale to Dr. Priestley, in which the sentiments of Dr. Lardner on the subject of Watts' opinions are expressed in the most unequivocal terms. In conversation with Mr. Merivale, as stated in the letter, this great man observed; "I think Dr. Watts never was an Arian, to his honour be it spoken. When he first wrote of the trinity, I reckon he believed three equal divine persons. But in the latter part of his life, for several years before his death, and before he was seized with an

* It was not contrary to the christianity of Watts, to search for the truth, and change his opinions when he found them erroneous. He did not entangle himself with creeds of men's invention, nor promise to conform to a system of faith, as the only true explication of scripture. This, he knew, would be stopping at once the channel of inquiry, and giving perpetual currency to all the errors, which the folly, ignorance, and selfishness of men, have entailed upon the world.

"I thank God," said he, "that I have learned to retract my former sentiments, and change them, when upon stricter search and review they appear less agreeable to the divine standard of faith.

"It doth not belong to such poor, imperfect beings as we are, to remain for ever immoveable in all the same opinions, that we have once indulged, nor to stamp every sentiment with immortality. For a man to be obstinately tenacious of an old mistake, and incorrigibly fond of an obscure phrase or conception, because he has once admitted it, is the shame, and not the glory, of human nature."—*Preface to Dissertations relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity*. Part II.

"How vain a presumption it is, with a pretence of divine authority, to impose mere human explications upon the consciences of men, and

imbecility of his faculties, he was a *unitarian*. How he came to be so, I cannot certainly say; but I think it was the result of his own meditations on the Scriptures. He was very desirous to promote that opinion, and wrote a great deal upon the subject."

After this conversation, Mr. Merivale, wishing to obtain further information respecting Watts' unpublished papers, wrote a letter of inquiry to Dr. Lardner, from whom he received the following reply;

"I question whether you have any where in print Dr. Watts' last thoughts upon the trinity. They were known to very few. My nephew, Neal, an understanding gentleman, was intimate with Dr. Watts, and often with the family where he lived. Sometimes in an evening, when they were alone, he would talk to his friends in the family, of his new thoughts concerning the person of Christ, and their great importance; and that, if he should be able to recommend them to the world, it would be the most considerable thing, that ever he performed. My nephew, therefore, came to me, and told me of it, and that the family was greatly concerned to hear him talk so much of the importance of these sentiments. I told my nephew, that Dr. Watts was right in saying

to forbid them all the sacred blessings of especial communion in the gospel, unless they testify their assent to such a particular hypothesis, or scheme of explication, which the imposers confess to be human, and yet impose it in their own prescribed form of words.

"The persons, who are guilty of this uncharitable practice, may consecrate their impositions, and their excommunications, with holy names, and call them pure zeal for the divinity of Christ; but I suspect it will be found in the great day, to deserve no better a character than a mistaken zeal for the honour of Christ, mingled, perhaps, with zeal for the divinity of their own notions."—*Essay on the true Importance of any human Schemes to explain the sacred Doctrines of the Trinity*. See. III.

they were important, but I was of opinion that he was unable to recommend them to the public, because he had never been used to a proper way of reasoning on such a subject. So it proved. My nephew being executor, had the papers, and showed me some of them. Dr. Watts had written a good deal, but they were not fit to be published. *Dr. Watts' Last Thoughts were COMPLETELY UNITARIAN.*”*

These facts are too plain and conclusive to need comment. They rest on the authority of Lardner, and they could not rest on a higher. He barely stated what he saw and knew. Prove Lardner to have been guilty of a deliberate falsehood, or mistaken in a case where he had every possible opportunity of knowing the truth, and you will invalidate his testimony. Till this be done, no one can rightfully refuse his assent to the position it establishes; which is, that the unpublished papers of Watts clearly showed him to have been a unitarian.

But we need not recur to unpublished writings. Enough may be found in print to convince us, that he was not a trinitarian, whatever else he may have been. In his *Solemn Address to the Deity* he speaks as follows;

“Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any one plain scripture, to have informed me which of the different opinions about the holy trinity, among the contending parties of christians, had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction and joy, my unbiassed heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly, in any single text, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three real distinct persons in the divine

* See the whole of Mr. Merivale's Letter, in Belsham's *Memoirs of Lindsey*, p. 216.

nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong fears of assenting to the mere inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased to express and include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out, and with certainty infer this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and engrafted it into my soul.

“But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult, and so abstruse a doctrine as this, in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtleties of disputes, and endless mazes of darkness. And can this strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understandings?”

Three things are obvious from these extracts. First, that Watts did not believe the trinity, as usually understood, to be “plainly taught in any single text;” secondly, that in his mind it was not so expressed in the Scriptures at large, as to be intelligible to “reason and conscience;” and thirdly, that the “strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God,” is not a “necessary and important part of the christian doctrine,” whatever may be thought of its reality. Is there a trinitarian of the present day, who

will assent to either of these propositions? It was a favourite opinion at the council of Nice, and for many ages after, that the trinity was not contained in the Scriptures, but taught by tradition. It has never been known, however, that Dr. Watts had a partiality for traditions, or that it was common with him to believe in doctrines, which his "reason and conscience" could not find in the Scriptures.

Hear what he says in his *Faithful Inquiry*, respecting the word *person*, as applied to the three parts of the trinity.

"Those writers, who call the sacred three by the name of three *persons*, do not assert or maintain, that this very word or expression of three persons, is found in Scripture, nor is the word *person expressly applied to them all three*.

"A distinct person, in the full and proper sense of the word among men, must be a distinct spirit; for a distinct person requires at least another distinct consciousness, with another distinct will, which seems to infer another different spirit. *And surely the Deity is not made up of three such distinct and different spirits*.

"Besides, it is sufficiently evident, that in the language of Scripture, and in the writings of the Jewish nation, those things, which are not strictly and properly *persons*, are often represented in a personal manner, as Wisdom, Law, Righteousness, Charity. And, therefore, the Sacred Three may be called three persons, or at least, *Three Scriptural Persons*, I hope, without offence, and without entering into the tedious, learned, and philosophical difficulties about the word person."*

* *Faithful Inquiry after the ancient and original Doctrine of the Trinity, taught by Christ and his Apostles*, p. 19, 20.

What is the import of these passages? Certainly not, that the Sacred Three are distinct, personal agents. They are not three beings, who have each a "distinct consciousness and will." That is, they are not distinct beings in any sense. They are "scriptural persons?" But what is a scriptural person? The writer has told us, that he understands by this term, the same as Wisdom, Law, Righteousness, when personified in the Scriptures. According to this sense, the three persons of the Deity are personifications of his modes of action. There is no spirit, or agent, distinct from the one true God. His unity is left untouched, and no unitarian would dissent from the substance of the views here taken.

In speaking further of the nature of Christ, Watts says, "This second person, this man Christ Jesus, has the true God united to him, or dwelling in him, in a peculiar manner; that is, the man Jesus Christ is assumed by the great God, into so near and intimate a union with himself, that they are often represented as one complex person, or personal agent. The man Jesus Christ is the inferiour agent or medium of the great God, who acteth whatsoever he pleases in and by the man Jesus Christ."* These views, in every important respect, are those of unitarians. They believe, that "the man Jesus Christ was the inferiour agent or medium of the great God," that the union between them was "so near and intimate," that Christ spoke, and taught, and acted in exact conformity with the divine will, and that all he said has the same truth and authority, as if God himself had spoken. They believe, as well as Watts, that Christ was *inferiour* to the Deity, and acted in all things by divine influence, light, and strength.

* *Ibid*, p. 24.

Attend, also, to some remarks of Watts on the Holy Spirit. After intimating, that "the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, when it speaks of things after the ascension of Christ, very generally, or for the most part means, that *power or influence* of the eternal spirit of God, *which proceedeth from the Father,*" he goes on to add,

"If the Holy Spirit were really a true and proper person, it would be as difficult to account for all these, and as many more expressions of scripture, which cannot possibly be ascribed to a proper person; and if in some places these impersonal expressions, or in other places the personal expressions, must be figurative, why may not my explication of them do as well as the contrary? And thus the spirit of God need *not any where be construed into a real, proper, distinct person.*

"I know not any place in scripture, which requires us to make express personal addresses, either of prayer, or of praise. unto the Spirit.

"Surely if praises or prayers were necessary to be offered distinctly to the Holy Spirit, 'tis very strange, that of all the writers of the New Testament, not one of them should give us some hint of it in precept, instruction; or example; but neither Matthew, Mark, Luke nor John, Paul nor Peter, James nor Jude have left us any thing whence we can infer it."*

Now, if there be any meaning in words, can we infer from this language, that Watts believed the Holy Spirit to be a distinct being, equal in power and duration to God the Father? On the contrary, could he express in more decided terms his disbelief of the personality of the Holy Spirit, or of the propriety of its receiving wor

* *Faithful Inquiry, &c.* p. 30, 32:

ship and praise? What kind of faith in the trinity is that, which rejects the separate personal existence, and the worship of the Holy Spirit? To call a man a trinitarian, with such a faith, is contradictory and absurd.

I am not attempting to exhibit a general system of Watts's theological opinions. In some respects they were peculiar, but these peculiarities are not concerned in the present discussion. I aim only to prove, that he was not a trinitarian, or that he did not believe in the existence of three equal, and separate persons, beings, agents, or essences, in the Deity. On the testimony of Lardner, and especially on Watts's own writings as quoted above, the argument may safely rest, without danger of being destroyed or weakened.

You refer to Watts's Psalms and Hymns, as testifying to his trinitarianism. Can you be ignorant of the fact, that he was desirous, long before his death, of suppressing or altering these, but was prevented by circumstances wholly beyond his control? He had sold the copyright, and could not recover it. This he states as the reason why he was compelled to desist from any attempt to make such alterations, as his change of sentiments would seem to require.*

* In writing to Mr. Tomkins, on the subject of his Hymns, Watts says, "I might tell you, that of all the books I have written, that particular copy is not mine. I sold it for a trifle to Mr. Lawrence, near thirty years ago, and his posterity make money of it to this day, and I can scarce claim a right to make any alteration in the book which would injure the sale of it."

Again, he replied to Mr. Grove, who suggested alterations, "that he should be glad to do it, but it was out of his power, for he had parted with the copy, and the bookseller would not suffer any such alteration." See *Monthly Repository*, vol. viii. p. 770, 771.

Many particulars respecting the theological opinions of Watts, may be seen in Belsham's *Memoir of Landary*, p. 216.—*Scriptures in the Month. Rep.* [vol. viii. pp. 685, 715, 768.] on a publication by Mr.

With these short hints and extracts, I am willing to leave it to the judgment and candour of every impartial reader to decide, whether I committed a very heinous offence in placing even "the pious and heavenly minded Watts in such company," as that of Newton, Locke, Lardner, Whitby, Lindsey, and others of well known piety and excellence, and of similar theological sentiments.

I have now done with your Letter, although a very important part of the subject, which connects itself with the views you have taken, remains untouched. A partial examination only has been made of the moral influence and advantages of unitarianism, compared with calvinism. I propose to pursue the subject, particularly as it regards the trinity and atonement, and that I may not be obliged to go out of the track already commenced, I hope you will allow me to address to you two or three letters on these topics. My next will be on the practical influence of a belief in the trinity.

Yours

A UNITARIAN OF BALTIMORE.

Palmer, entitled, *Dr. Watts no Socinian*.—*Christian Disciple*, vol. ii. New Series, p. 461; and vol. iii. p. 190.—The whole of the *Solemn Address to the Deity* is contained in the *Christian Reformer*, vol. i. p. 113.

York

ON THE

MORAL TENDENCY

OF A

BELIEF

IN

THE TRINITY.

BEING THE

TENTH LETTER TO THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER D.D.

[From the Unitarian Miscellany.]



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MORAL TENDENCY
OF A
BELIEF IN THE TRINITY.

SIR,

Although I have finished the examination of your Reply, I do not think proper to dismiss the subject, till I have considered two or three other points intimately connected with it, and which, in substance, if not in form, you have embraced. You started, as we have seen, with a loud and unqualified charge against the morals of unitarians. When you were met on this ground, and required to make your charge good, you dexterously changed your position without apology or explanation, and renewed your attack not on the *character*, but the *opinions* of the persons, against whom your assault had been directed. This, to be sure, was a virtual acknowledgement of the haste, and indiscretion, and want of wisdom, with which your first asseverations were hazarded, but it was hardly that open avowal of mistake, and of unconscionable injury, which, in a case of so much importance, candour and the christian temper would seem to demand.

After releasing yourself with happy facility from this topic, which was the only one at first claiming discussion, the single object of your Reply was to draw as revolting a picture as possible of the immoral and irre-

ligious tendency of the unitarian principles. When you found facts too stubborn to be moulded into such shapes as you desired, your sagacity was not long in discovering the convenience of going into the region of faith and opinion, where the road is more broad, and the license less restricted. To this point I have endeavoured to confine myself, as far as the subjects brought under discussion would admit. The tendency of the calvinistic doctrines, which were particularly specified in your Reply, has been examined, and compared with the tendency of the unitarian sentiments comprising similar objects. The same course I propose to pursue in regard to the *Trinity*, and the *Atonement*. To the former of these the present letter shall be devoted.

As the doctrine of the trinity embraces no moral precepts, nor immediate rules of action, its good or evil tendency must depend on the power it exerts in giving a tone and bias to the mind favourable or unfavourable to just notions of the Deity, to the reception of moral truth, a reverence for the known laws of God, a respect for the voice of conscience, and a habitual frame of piety and benevolence. It has a very remote bearing, if any at all, on the clearness and obligation of the preceptive and practical part of religion. Trinitarians and unitarians are equally convinced of the divine origin, and absolute truth of every thing which the Saviour taught; they equally consider all his ordinances and precepts as imposing commands, which must be implicitly obeyed. Hence it is, that neither a belief, nor disbelief of the doctrine has any tendency to diminish or strengthen the authority of the christian religion, as it relates to the necessity of obedience, repentance, reformation, and a holy life.

We are not hence to infer, that the trinity is an error of no consequence. All error is injurious. Of truth we can say with certainty, that it will always lead to good ends; error, on, the contrary, however innocent in itself, must be pernicious in its results. It cannot be doubted, that many christians have been good and pious with erroneous creeds, but it is a case equally indubitable, that they would have been better with true ones. The criminality, and the evil of error are very different things; a man is compelled to believe according to his convictions; he may be deceived; many evils may follow from this deception, but no crime can be attached, unless there has been a culpable indolence, or a perverted will; or some unhallowed purpose in forming opinions. A belief in the trinity involves no crime; its iniquity consists in its evil consequences; it obscures the perfections of the Deity, obstructs the current of devotional feeling, perplexes the humble inquirer after truth, and thus essentially impairs the means and motives of a rational worship, practical piety and vital godliness.

In attempting to trace out the tendency of the trinity, it is important to attain some definite notions of the doctrine itself; and here we shall be forced to encounter much difficulty at the very outset. It would be no easy task to enumerate the parties into which the advocates for this doctrine have been divided, from the time of its origin to the present day, and the opposing schemes which they have invented to bring it within the compass of the human faculties. They have not yet approached so near to a similarity of views as to agree in a definition. One of the heaviest censures affected to be passed by the orthodox on unitarians, is, that they

do not agree in explaining their own opinions. Before this point is insisted on any further, we should be glad if trinitarians themselves would unite in some common explanation of the doctrine, which they profess to think the most important in religion; or at least show some good reason, why we are to reverence as a fundamental article of faith, a doctrine, which cannot be defined in scripture language, and which is confessed to be unintelligible, and inexplicable. The truth is, that no plan has been devised, which was not incumbered with so many insurmountable difficulties, that few minds could be induced to receive it in that shape. Hence plans have been multiplied, the powers of invention and combination have been put in requisition, till the theories of the trinity have become as numerous as the writers by whom it has been attempted to be explained.*

* The following extract from Sparks' Letters on the Protestant Episcopal Church, [p. 149] will illustrate the above remarks, and exhibit the views of some of the English writers, concerning the trinity.

"*First*, the Athanasians, among whom were Dr. Waterland, Dr. Taylor, and probably Archbishop Secker, from the encomium he passes on the Athanasian Creed, [Works, vol. vi. p. 126] maintain, that the trinity consists of three distinct, independent, and equal persons, constituting one and the same God; or, in other words, that 'the Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, the Holy Ghost is Almighty; and yet, there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.'

"*Secondly*, according to Mr. How's theory, there are three distinct, intelligent hypostases, each having a distinct intelligent nature, united in some inexplicable manner, so as to make one God in somewhat the same way as the corporal, sensitive, and intellectual faculties are united to form one man.

"*Thirdly*, Dr. Wallis was an advocate for the Sabellian hypothesis; and held that the three persons in the trinity were only three *modes* or *relations*, which the Deity bears to his creatures. This, also, was probably the opinion of Archbishop Tillotson.

"*Fourthly*, Bishop Pearson supposed the Father to be an underived

Amidst this chaos of incertitude and variety, a few landmarks may be discerned, which seem to have served as common guides; and the numerous schemes to which the prolific invention of theologians has given birth, may all be arranged, perhaps, without much violence, under two general ones, the *Sabellian*, and the *Tripersonal*. The former teaches a trinity of modes in the Deity, the latter a trinity of beings. The modalists have succeeded in establishing a trinity in name, and in destroying it in reality, for there is no more reason for

essence, and the Son to have received every thing by communication from God the Father. 'There can be but one person,' says he, 'originally of himself subsisting in that infinite Being, because a plurality of more persons, so subsisting, would necessarily infer a multiplicity of Gods.' The Son possessed the whole divine nature by *communication*, not by *participation*, and in such a way, that he was as really God, as the Father. See Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, Oxford 1792, vol. 1. p. 157, 217. Bishop Bull and Dr. Owen adopted a similar theory.

"*Fifthly*, in the system of Dr. Thomas Burnet, the Father is a self-existing Being, the Son and Spirit are *dependent*; but so united, that divine perfections and worship may be ascribed to each.

"*Sixthly*, Mr. Baxter defines the three divine persons to be *wisdom, power, and love*; and illustrates his meaning by the *vital power, intellect, and will*, in the soul of man, and by *motion, light, and heat* in the sun. For this explanation he was indebted to the sharpened wits of the schoolmen.

"*Seventhly*, Bishop Burgess supposes the three *persons* of the Deity to make one God, but does not allow, that these persons are three *beings*. He makes out his position by the following syllogism. 'The Scriptures declare, that there is only one God; the same Scriptures declare, that there are three omnipresent *persons*; but there cannot be two omnipresent *beings*; therefore the three omnipresent persons can be only one God.' According to this hypothesis, the trinity is made up of three nonentities.

"*Eighthly*, Bishop Gastrell says, 'The three names of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must denote a three-fold difference, or distinction, belonging to God, but such as is consistent with the unity and simplicity of the divine nature; for each of these includes

supposing the Deity to exist in three modes, than in three hundred. As neither the unity, nor the attributes of God, are affected by this system, it differs in no essential respect from unitarianism; its bearing is nearly the same on the object of worship, and means of piety.

Another general scheme, or rather a substitute for a scheme, has lately grown up, and gained much popularity. It is that which shrouds the trinity in a *mystery*. This is a last resort; it rejects the aid of reason, and throws an impenetrable veil of obscurity over revelation. It is, nevertheless, founded on a principle of universal

the *whole idea* of God and *something more*. So far as they express the nature of God, they all adequately and exactly signify the same. It is the additional signification, which makes all the distinction between them.' According to Bishop Gastrell, then, 'the Father includes the whole idea of God, and something more; the Son includes the whole idea of God, and something more; the Holy Ghost includes the whole idea of God, and something more; while altogether, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost make one entire God, and no more.' See Belsham's Reply to Dr. Moysey, London, 1819, p. 32.

"*Ninthly*, a scheme, which certainly vies with any other for novelty, is that lately advanced by Mr. Heber, in his Bampton Lectures. He has made the marvellous discovery, that the second and third persons in the trinity are no other than the angel Michael and Gabriel. It was the second person, who conversed with Moses on Mount Sinai; and the third person, who constituted the Jewish Shekinah. See Heber's Bampton Lectures, preached before the university of Oxford, 1815, sec. iv. p. 211, 228. To clear up this point, the lecturer levies most heavily upon the Jewish Rabbies, the Targums, the Mahometan Doctors, and the ancient Fathers. Appendix to sec. iv. p. 240—250.

"*Lastly*, I will mention only one scheme more, which is that of Dr. Sherlock. He says, 'The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are as really distinct persons, as Peter, James, and John; each of which is God. We must allow each person to be a God. These three infinite minds are distinguished, just as three created minds are, by self-consciousness; and by mutual consciousness, each person of these has the *whole*

application; whenever you are perplexed in any argument, or caught between the griping horns of a dilemma, you have only to cry out, *a mystery*, and your victory is accomplished; you are encased in an armour of adamant, and may exult with great composure over the weakness of your antagonist, who can wield no other weapons, than such as are supplied by common sense, reason, and plain truth. No one, it is presumed, ever put on this armour till he found these weapons inadequate to his purpose. A mystical revelation is a contradiction in terms; and a mystical trinity, whatever else it may mean, can never mean a revealed trinity. Just in proportion as you detect mysteries in the Gospel, or doctrines, which were professedly taught as revealed truths of the greatest importance, but not intended to be understood, just so far you will find reasons to distrust the divine authority of the religion of the Saviour, and to disrespect its author. What there is in a mystery especially conducive to morals and piety, must be left to the wisdom of the initiated to develope.

The kind of trinity, to which my future remarks will be directed, is that contained in the Confession of Faith, and which I conceive to approach nearer than either of the others to an undisguised exposition of the doctrine. "In the unity of the godhead, there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost."* As a general

wisdom, power, and goodness of the other two.' This scheme differs little from the Athanasian, except in being more clear and definite."

For a more full account of the above statements, see Doddridge's Lectures, P. vii. prop. 132.—Lindsey's Apology, p. 63.—Adams's Dictionary of Religions, p. 291.—Worcester's Trinitarian Review, No. 1.—Reply to Moysey, p. 32. 123.—Rees' Cycl. Art. Trinity.

* Confession of Faith, chap. ii. § 3.

definition, this seems sufficiently clear. Every one, probably, who assents to it, has views peculiar to himself respecting the nature and relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet all suppose them to be three distinct beings, and that each being is God. It is no part of my present object to inquire how it could be brought to pass, that three beings, each of whom is God, could make one being, and one God; or how there could be three beings, each of whom is God, and not be three Gods. I am engaged with the tendency, and not with the truth, or consistency of this doctrine.*

In the first place, the notion of the trinity destroys the simplicity of worship, and essentially weakens all the good effects, which we may expect to derive from a pure and spiritual devotion. If there be one precept in the Scriptures, more positive than any other, it is, that the undivided homage of men is due to ONE BEING, to the Supreme God alone. It was the command of our Saviour himself, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve." "True worshippers," he tells us, "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."† We are to adore and reverence him as our Creator, to praise him as the source of all good, to love and thank him for his paternal care and kindness. As he is the sole author of all things, he is to receive our sole homage, submission, gratitude. In the dispensa-

* Dr. South seriously discourses on the subject as follows. "That any one should be both father and son to the same person, produce himself, be cause and effect too, and so the copy give being to its original, seems at first sight so very strange and unaccountable, that were it not to be adored as a *mystery*, it would be exploded as a *contradiction*."—South's Sermons, vol. iii. p. 140, Lond. 1718.

† Matt. iv. 10.—John, iv. 23.

tions of providence, and in the christian religion, no feature is so striking, as that which manifests the existence of one supreme object of worship, one God of infinite perfections, who claims all our services.

How do we retain this great characteristic of our religion, in what respect do we obey the commands of Christ, when we make three objects of worship, when we lift up our voices in adoration and prayer to three separate beings, and address them each as the supreme, self-existent, independent God? When you offer prayers to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, let it be admitted, that you do not consider them three Gods, although each is called God; you must, notwithstanding, have a notion of three distinct beings at the time of your devotions, and address them as such. You worship three Gods in form and imagination, that is, in reality, so far as your conceptions of the Deity present an object to the understanding.

You do not see God, and you must worship him under such properties, as you are able to conceive and combine to form his nature and character. If you have in your mind three separate beings, possessing each the same properties as the others, and address them as separate, equal beings, and under different titles, it is perfectly certain, that the nature of your worship, and its effects on the mind and character, will be precisely the same, as if you acknowledged yourself to be worshipping three Gods. From this kind of worship, two evils of no common magnitude follow; first, the crime of disobeying a divine command, in not acting the part of "true worshippers," who, our Saviour tells us, worship the FATHER; secondly, all the practical ill consequences, which flow from

having three objects of religious worship instead of one.*

Unitarians avoid these evils by adhering rigidly to simplicity and unity in their worship. With them, God is believed to be one being; they worship him in his undivided and infinitely perfect character; their love and gratitude, adoration and reverence, confidence and joy, all centre in him. They dare not ascribe to any other being the honours and glory, which the Scriptures every where command us to render to the Father. They adore his goodness for the means, which he has provided for our salvation through the instructions of his Son. They honour Christ as the appointed Saviour, whom God endowed in an eminent degree with the gifts of his spirit, with the strength of his power, with the light of his wisdom and truth; they feel towards him all the veneration, gratitude, and affection, which his heavenly office, his sublime instructions, his trials and sufferings justly demand; but they do not worship him as God, because the Scriptures teach, and reason verifies the truth, that there is but "ONE GOD, the FATHER," who requires our

* The following extract is from the Litany used in the Episcopal Church.

"O God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

"O God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

"O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.

"O holy, glorious, and blessed Trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

If we are to understand language in its common acceptation, the above extract inculcates the worship of four Gods. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity, are here worshipped separately, and respectively under the title of God,

unceasing and undivided service. Jesus himself always prayed to the Father, and said to his disciples in terms which it would seem impossible to mistake, "in that day ye shall ask ME nothing; whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER in my name, HE will give it you."* Can you have a plainer declaration, that the Father *only* is to be worshipped? From views like the above, unitarians are strengthened in the belief that their system of faith is true, that it has greatly the advantage of the trinitarian scheme in securing a pure and scriptural worship, promoting love to God, and kindling the fervour of a steady piety.

Again, the trinitarian faith not only makes the Son equal with the Father, sharing the same glory, and entitled to the same homage and love, but actually raises him higher, and clothes him with a more adorable, lovely, and beneficent character. It is an important part of this system, that man, by transgression, was "bound over to the *wrath* of God, and curse of the law."† Under this state of wrath, the Father was resolved to have vengeance on his weak and offending children, and would not suffer his anger to be appeased except by the sacrifice of the Son, who offered himself a willing victim to temper the vindictive rage, which threatened destruction and torment to the whole human race. It is to the compassion and benevolence of the Son alone, that we are indebted for the mercy of God. We owe it not to the purpose of the Father, that we have not been consumed by his anger; the Son is the voluntary, the unassisted author of our rescue, and in this character is worthy of our supreme homage at the expense of every sentiment and feeling of love, gratitude, and reverence,

* John xvi. 23.

† Confession of Faith, chap. vi. §6.

to which God, acting the part of a Father, would be entitled. What good tendency on the practical morals and piety of christians do you discover in a doctrine, which blots out all the moral attributes of the Deity, makes him an angry, vindictive, and cruel being, and clothes another with the ensigns of his supremacy and perfection? What do you find in such a doctrine, which is calculated to quicken devotion, provoke to good works, establish charity, or to invigorate any of the christian virtues?

Moreover, the notion that Christ was God destroys the force of his example. One of the most encouraging assurances, that the precepts of the Gospel are suited to our nature, condition, and improvement, is exhibited in the conduct of Jesus. We read the history of his life, attend him amidst the perils he encountered, the sufferings he endured; we contemplate with admiration the immaculate purity of his character; his disregard of the world and its attractions; we behold his piety, benevolence, meekness, forbearance; we discover in his life a perfect illustration of his doctrines and precepts. To this character we look as an illustrious model of moral excellence, at once commanding our imitation, and serving as a guide to our steps.

All this is a delusion if Christ were the Supreme God; no points of resemblance exist between God and man, from which the example of the former can be made a motive of action to the latter. If Christ were God, it cost him nothing to resist temptation; for he could not be tempted. That he refrained from sin under many trying circumstances is no proof, that we can refrain under similar ones. According to the trinitarian theory, therefore, the example of Christ was totally

without value, for it was impossible for him to be any other than a holy being; and in practising his exalted virtues he was only yielding a necessary compliance with the principles and laws of his nature.

This result is adverse to the account given by the apostles. St. Paul says, "It behooved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren;" and that, "he was in all points tempted like as we are."* In this character his spotless example is such as we may and ought to follow. He was made like us, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," tempted as we are, and exposed to the same evils and trials. He was without sin, not because it was impossible for him to sin, but because he exercised with an unfailing resolution and firmness the power he possessed of resisting temptation, moderating his desires, and complying with all the divine laws; the perfection of his character consisted in his deeds of active piety and goodness. All men have a similar power, and are capable of similar deeds; not in the same degree, but of the same kind. Hence the example of Christ is adapted to the human condition, and affords a motive to the obedience of his laws; the moment you suppose him to be God, the example and the motive vanish.

Much ingenuity has been exercised in attempts to remove this difficulty, by striving to make it appear, that Christ was God and man united; but even admitting the fact of this inexplicable union, which seems to have been at first devised for the purpose of reconciling discrepancies, it does not take away the difficulty in the present instance. The apostle speaks of "*one* Lord Jesus Christ," and of "*one* mediator between God and

* Heb. ii. 17, iv. 15.

men." However his nature was constituted, he was *one* being. If he was God, he must have possessed all the attributes and perfections of God; if he could be tempted in his human nature, he possessed an unlimited power of resistance in the divine, a power, which no human being, nor any other being but God, could possess. His perfection as God could not be obscured by adding the human nature; nor by this appendage was he brought any nearer in his moral attributes and capacity to the condition of man. It is still the example of God, which we behold in his life, an example, which we have neither power nor hope to imitate.

This doctrine of two natures, which is a main prop in the edifice of the trinity, is not every where so passive and inefficient. It fails of any good effects where its aid is most needed by its advocates; in other quarters it is active and desolating; it renders useless all rules of interpretation, and makes the language of Christ ambiguous and contradictory. It represents him as speaking in two characters, sometimes as God, sometimes as man, without intimating in which character. Pursue this notion to its consequences; as man he might be mistaken like other men; he has in no single instance given a hint by which we can be certain in which character he spoke, but he uniformly acted and conversed as one being, possessed of one nature, and sustaining one character. By what rule shall we judge? One reads his words, and says it is God that speaks; another says it is man. Who shall decide? Or how shall it be proved, that he did not utter the language, and speak with the wisdom of man only, when he published the doctrine of a future state, or any other of the doctrines of revelation. Do you say, that the divine

nature always controlled the human in these cases? How do you know? You can only decide by your arbitrary opinion, and every man may do the same. That is, no other rule appears than the fancy, caprice, and prejudices of men. In short, this doctrine of the double nature of Christ introduces uncertainty and confusion into the whole scheme of revelation; it leaves no safe ground for the humble christian to stand on; it carries destruction equally to the moral precepts, and revealed doctrines of the gospel.

Trinitarians are apt to dwell much on the humility of Christ in descending from the glory of the heavens, taking up his abode with men, submitting to the pains and hardships of a life of sufferings on earth, for the noble and benevolent purpose of procuring the salvation of mankind. They make this a ground of love and affectionate gratitude, and conceive that the ardour and effects of their emotions are much increased, by the conviction of the supreme deity of Christ. But how can they talk of the humility of the unchangeable God? Can the Being, who is the same from everlasting to everlasting, and whose perfections are as immutable as his nature, can such a Being humble himself, lay aside his attributes, and take upon him the nature of a frail, sinful man? Such a supposition is at war with every dictate of the understanding, and every feeling of the heart; in this view the humiliation of Christ is imaginary; it is impossible; it affords no rational incitements of love, sympathy, or gratitude. But "it is our belief, that Christ's humiliation was real and entire, that the whole Saviour, and not a part of him suffered, that his crucifixion was a scene of deep and unmixed agony. As we stand round his cross, our minds are not distract-

ed, nor our sensibility weakened, by contemplating him as composed of incongruous and infinitely differing minds, and as having a balance of infinite felicity. We recognize, in the dying Jesus, but one mind. This, we think, renders his sufferings, and his patience and love in bearing them, incomparably more impressive and affecting, than the system we oppose.”* Here are just and forcible reasons for being deeply affected with the humiliation and sufferings of Christ; we consider him a being who was capable of suffering, and who voluntarily submitted to it for our sake.

One reason more shall be added, why the trinity has an unfavourable tendency with respect to piety and moral excellence. It is allowed by all christians, that a special object of the Messiahship of Jesus, was to make known and confirm the certainty of a future state, to open the prospects of immortality, and to fit men for an existence in another world. All our hopes as christians are built on the belief of a resurrection of the dead, and another state of being. Whence do we derive this belief? Wholly from the death and resurrection of Christ; according to the reasoning of the apostle, “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be the dead rise not.”† Here, it seems, the resurrection of men is argued from the resurrection of Christ. What force would be in this argument, if Christ were God; or what possible reason should we have for the consoling belief,

* Rev. Dr. Channing’s Ordination Sermon at Baltimore, p. 26.

† 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14, 15.

that we shall revive from the sleep of death, because he has revived, "and become the first fruits of them that slept?" For if God, or, which is the same thing, a person who was truly God, could have died and arisen from the dead, we cannot hence infer, that we shall rise, any more than that we can create ourselves anew, or do any other act of omnipotence. Take the character which the apostle gives of Christ; consider him as subject from his nature to suffering and death, as acting by the power of the Father; and not of himself; believe his own words when he speaks of his dependence, his limited knowledge and faculties; the argument then becomes an irresistible one. As God raised him from the dead, we have as convincing a proof as we can have, that he will raise us likewise; and on this substantial ground rests our hope of future safety and glory.

The weight and value of this argument are increased, when it is considered as furnishing a motive to obedience and holiness. If any thing will subdue the hardness of the sinner's heart, and awaken him to a sense of the folly and danger of sin; if any thing will quicken the sensibility of conscience, and impress the laws of heaven on the understanding, it is the certainty of a future judgment, a state of being where justice will raise her impartial scales, and award to each the precise measure of his deserts. The strength of this motive, and its influence on the mind and practice of every individual, will be in exact proportion to the conviction he feels, that the soul will exist hereafter, receive a just retribution from its Maker, know the pains of depravity and vice, and the joys of conscious innocence and purity. The system of faith, which adds the greatest force to the argument for a resurrection, will be the best calculated to give efficacy

to this motive, and thus advance the great purpose of the christian religion; but from what has been said, it is quite obvious that the trinity, even if it be true, lends no help to such a system.

I have thus taken a short view of the influence of the trinity on some of the prominent principles of christian faith and practice. With what accuracy it has been done, I willingly leave to be decided by the candour and judgment of every reader; I have been obliged to content myself with hints only, but they embrace a compass of argument, in which may be included almost every branch and article of the orthodox faith. The trinity is a kind of trunk, which gives being and nourishment to the whole; and to me it would seem, that the evil consequences of this doctrine, if they were not checked by others more rational in their nature, and practical in their tendency, would overthrow the whole system of revelation, and leave nothing but a heartless infidelity or gloomy skepticism behind. The doctrine of the divine unity, in its simple form, is encumbered with none of these evils; it admits the authority of Jesus, and all he has revealed, taught, commanded, and promised, to operate with undiminished power on the understanding and affections of believers.

My next letter will be on the atonement.

Yours,

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